

ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN SHAPING GLOBACOM NIGERIA'S BRAND IMAGE IN ABUJA

Akaito J. Laraba

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
Nasarawa State University, Keffi
jessyakaito@gmail.com

Anthony Igyuve

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
Nasarawa State University, Keffi
anthonyigyuve@gmail.com

Kaior S. Akpede

Department of Mass Communication,
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
Nasarawa State University, Keffi
kaiorakpede621@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the role of social media influencers in shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja. The study identified the types of influencers used by Globacom Nigeria, examined their effect on brand image, assessed their influence on consumers' perceptions and attitudes, and examined associated challenges. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted, with data collected from 387 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings showed that macro-influencers were the most commonly identified type used by Globacom Nigeria. Inferential results revealed that influencer credibility, authenticity, audience reach and content quality had significant positive effects on brand image, with the model explaining 61.0% of the variance in brand image ($R^2 = 0.610$, $p < 0.001$). Similarly, influencer credibility, authenticity, audience engagement and content relevance significantly influenced consumers' perceptions and attitudes, explaining 55.7% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.557$, $p < 0.001$). High cost, credibility concerns, difficulty measuring campaign effectiveness, negative publicity and fake followers were the major challenges identified. The study concludes that social media influencers significantly contribute to Globacom Nigeria's brand image and consumer responses in Abuja. It recommends strategic selection of credible and relevant influencers, continuous monitoring and effective evaluation of influencer campaigns.

Keywords: Social media influencers, brand image, consumer perception, consumer attitudes, influencer marketing, Globacom Nigeria, Abuja

Introduction

Social media has become a critical channel for modern marketing communications, transforming the ways in which organisations can promote their products and engage consumers. The rise of internet and social media penetration in Nigeria has created new opportunities for corporations to leverage social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and X to market their products to local consumers. According to DataReportal (2024), Nigeria recorded 103 million internet users and 36.75 million social media user identities in

January 2024, highlighting the importance of the digital space in the Nigerian consumer market. As such, organisations are increasingly capitalising on the popularity of social media to raise brand awareness, facilitate two-way communication with consumers and shape positive brand image perceptions.

An important aspect of social media marketing is the use of social media influencers, who are individuals that have amassed significant digital following and can exert influence on the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of their online following. The credibility, relatability, expertise and connection which social media influencers establish with their audiences enables them to effectively promote products and brands, as conventional advertisement strategies fail to resonate with consumers. Indeed, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that the value of influencer-generated content and the credibility of influencers can enhance consumer trust in branded content, which can influence brand awareness and purchase intentions. Similarly, Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020) found that influencer credibility and identification can contribute to effective advertising.

Such benefits of influencer marketing are particularly pertinent to the Nigerian telecommunications industry, in which telecommunications companies such as Globacom Nigeria have to invest in aggressive marketing to gain the attention and loyalty of Nigerian consumers (Zhou et al. 2023). The influence of social media influencers can help Globacom Nigeria to build a positive image in the minds of Nigerian consumers, which can impact their attitudes towards the brand. By partnering with social media influencers, the company can utilise their vast online following to facilitate effective two-way communication with Nigerian consumers. Instead of using traditional methods of advertising, Globacom Nigeria can utilise the popularity of social media influencers to encourage the promotion of its products and brands, enhancing brand image perceptions among Nigerian consumers (Janssen et al., 2022).

Influencer image perceptions are also critical in determining the effectiveness of influencer marketing and brand image. Credibility and authenticity can enhance influencer marketing by enhancing consumer acceptance of influencer-generated content, whereas unauthentic influencer marketing can yield negative perceptions of the brand (Audrezet, et al., 2020).

Although previous studies have established that influencer credibility, authenticity, identification, follower size and influencer-brand fit can affect consumer responses (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Schouten et al., 2020; Audrezet et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2022), less is known about how these factors specifically contribute to the brand image of Nigerian telecommunications companies. Much of the existing literature has focused on advertising effectiveness, consumer trust and purchase intentions rather than the specific relationship between social media influencers and brand image within the Nigerian telecommunications context. Therefore, this study examines the role of social media influencers in shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja

Statement of the Problem

The Nigerian telecommunications industry is highly competitive, making a favourable brand image important for building consumer trust, loyalty and continued patronage. In this environment, social media influencers provide telecommunications brands with an additional channel for communicating with consumers in a more personal and interactive manner. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing is not guaranteed. One major challenge is influencer credibility and authenticity. Consumers may respond negatively when sponsored content appears forced, exaggerated or inconsistent with an influencer's usual identity. Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard (2020) found that commercial partnerships can create

tensions around influencer authenticity, particularly when followers perceive those commercial interests have become more important than genuine content. Lou and Yuan (2019) similarly established that influencer credibility is an important factor in building consumers' trust in branded social media content. Another challenge is inappropriate influencer-brand fit and audience relevance. The large number of followers an influencer has does not necessarily mean that the person is suitable for a particular brand or target market. Janssen, Schouten and Croes (2022) found that product-influencer fit, together with follower size, can affect advertising outcomes through credibility and identification.

Despite the growing international literature on influencer credibility, authenticity, influencer-brand fit and audience characteristics (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Schouten, Janssen & Verspaget, 2020; Audrezet et al., 2020; Janssen et al., 2022), there remains limited empirical evidence on how these issues operate within Nigeria's telecommunications industry. In particular, there is insufficient evidence on the specific challenges associated with using social media influencers to shape the brand image of Globacom Nigeria among consumers in Abuja. This creates a need for context-specific research that examines not only whether influencers affect brand image but also the factors that may strengthen or limit their effectiveness. Therefore, this study examines the role of social media influencers in shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identify the types of social media influencers used by Globacom Nigeria in promoting its brand among consumers in Abuja.
2. Examine the effect of social media influencers on Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja.
3. Assess the extent to which social media influencers influence consumers' perception and attitudes toward Globacom Nigeria's brand in Abuja.
4. Examine the challenges associated with the use of social media influencers in shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image in Abuja.

Review Of Literature

Concept of Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers (SMIs) have emerged as important actors in contemporary marketing communication as social media has become increasingly integrated into consumers' everyday lives. They are individuals who build and maintain audiences on digital platforms and whose opinions, recommendations and content can influence followers' perceptions and behavioural responses. The influence of these individuals is not based simply on the size of their audience but also on the relationships, credibility and perceived similarity they develop with followers. Lou and Yuan (2019) argue that the value of influencer-generated content and the credibility of the influencer are important in developing consumers' trust in branded content. This suggests that influencer marketing differs from conventional advertising because promotional messages are communicated through individuals with whom consumers may already have an established social or psychological connection. Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020) found that influencer credibility and identification are important to advertising effectiveness, while Janssen, Schouten and Croes (2022) demonstrated that follower numbers and influencer-product fit can influence advertising outcomes through credibility and identification. Taken together, these studies indicate that the strategic value of an influencer depends on both the

ability to reach consumers and the ability to communicate with them in a manner that is considered relevant and trustworthy. Another important feature of social media influencers is their perceived authenticity. Followers often value influencers because their content appears more personal, accessible and relatable than conventional celebrity advertising. This perceived closeness can create a stronger sense of connection between the influencer and the audience and can make recommendations appear more like personal communication than formal advertising. However, the commercial nature of influencer marketing creates a potential tension. Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard (2020) found that commercial partnerships can threaten influencers' perceived authenticity when followers believe that promotional activities are inconsistent with the influencer's identity or motivations. Thus, the persuasive value of influencers depends partly on maintaining a balance between commercial objectives and the authenticity expected by followers. This tension is particularly important when influencers are used to shape brand image. Influencers can transfer meanings associated with their personality, lifestyle, expertise and social identity to the brands they endorse. When there is a good fit between the influencer and the brand, consumers may interpret the endorsement as more credible and may develop more favourable perceptions of the brand. Conversely, poor influencer-brand fit, excessive commercialisation or questionable credibility may weaken the intended brand association. Schouten et al. (2020) and Janssen et al. (2022) both demonstrate the importance of credibility, identification and influencer-product fit in determining consumer responses. Influencer selection should therefore be understood as a strategic brand decision rather than simply a method of purchasing access to a large online audience.

Concept of Brand Image

Brand image refers to the overall perceptions and associations that consumers develop about a brand. Godey et al. (2016), for example, found that social media marketing activities can influence brand equity and consumer responses, demonstrating the importance of digital communication in developing brand-related perceptions. For a telecommunications company such as Globacom Nigeria, brand image may therefore involve consumers' perceptions of service quality, reliability, innovation, value and the extent to which the brand is relevant to their everyday lives. Social media influencers can contribute to the development of these brand associations by presenting brands within personal stories, experiences and everyday situations. This differs from conventional advertising because the brand message is communicated through an individual whom followers may already perceive as familiar and credible. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that the credibility and value of influencer-generated content can increase consumers' trust in branded posts and contribute to brand-related outcomes. Similarly, Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020) showed that influencer credibility and identification can improve responses to endorsed brands. These findings suggest that influencers can become part of the process through which consumers interpret what a brand represents. Authenticity therefore represents an important link between influencer communication and brand image. Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard (2020) found that commercial relationships can threaten perceived influencer authenticity when followers believe that promotional content is inconsistent with the influencer's identity. This has implications for brand image because negative perceptions of the influencer may extend to the promoted brand. Similarly, Janssen, Schouten and Croes (2022) found that influencer-product fit and credibility can influence advertising outcomes. For Globacom, the choice of influencers should therefore reflect not only the size of their audiences but also their credibility, identity, content style and compatibility with the brand.

Review of Empirical Studies

Empirical research generally shows that social media influencers can affect consumers' responses to brands, but the strength of this effect depends on characteristics of the influencer, the audience and the brand-influencer relationship. A major theme in the literature is the importance of credibility and identification. Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020), using two experimental studies, compared influencer and celebrity endorsements and found that participants identified more strongly with influencers, perceived greater similarity with them and trusted them more than traditional celebrities. Their findings further showed that similarity, identification and trust helped explain differences in advertising effectiveness. This suggests that the effectiveness of influencers is not simply a consequence of their popularity; rather, their ability to establish psychological closeness and credibility with followers is central to their persuasive influence. This argument is supported by Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that the value of influencer-generated content and the credibility of influencers contribute to consumers' trust in branded content. Taken together, these findings indicate that consumers are more likely to respond positively to influencer marketing when the influencer is perceived as trustworthy and when the content provides value to the audience. The implication for brand management is that influencer campaigns may influence brand-related perceptions through the credibility of the communicator rather than through exposure alone. However, the empirical evidence also shows that audience size should not be treated as a direct measure of influencer effectiveness. De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017), in two experimental studies on Instagram influencer marketing, found that influencers with larger numbers of followers were generally perceived as more likeable because they were viewed as more popular. At the same time, the researchers found that using influencers with very large followings could have negative implications for brand attitudes when the promoted product was divergent from the influencer's usual content, partly because the brand could appear less unique. This finding is important because it suggests that reach can increase visibility, but the benefits of a large audience depend on how the influencer is perceived and how well the endorsement fits the brand. The issue of influencer-brand fit is therefore closely connected to credibility and consumer identification. Schouten et al. (2020) examined product-endorser fit alongside identification and credibility, while Janssen, Schouten and Croes (2022) similarly found that influencer-product fit and follower numbers can affect advertising outcomes through credibility and identification. The combined evidence suggests that brands should not select influencers solely on the basis of follower numbers. Instead, the influencer's image, audience and content should be compatible with the brand and the expectations of the target consumers. Another important issue emerging from the literature is authenticity. Influencers occupy a distinctive position because their persuasive power is partly based on the perception that they communicate personal experiences and opinions. Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard (2020) found that commercial partnerships can create tensions between influencers' commercial activities and the authenticity expected by their followers. This suggests that excessive commercialisation may weaken the very trust that makes influencer marketing attractive to brands. Thus, credibility and authenticity appear to operate together: credibility makes the message believable, while authenticity helps consumers perceive the endorsement as consistent with the influencer's identity. The literature also draws attention to transparency and sponsorship disclosure. Boerman and van Reijmersdal (2020), in an experimental study of children exposed to sponsored YouTube content, found that disclosure increased recognition of the advertising and understanding of its persuasive and selling intent. Their findings also showed that parasocial relationships influenced how disclosure affected brand attitudes. Although the study focused on children rather than adult telecommunications consumers, it demonstrates an important principle for influencer marketing: consumers' awareness of commercial intent can alter how they process sponsored content. Transparency is therefore

relevant not only as an ethical requirement but also as a factor that can shape consumers' responses to influencer communication.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Ajzen (1991), explains how individuals form behavioural intentions through three major factors: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. According to the theory, favourable attitudes, perceived social approval and a sense of control over performing a behaviour increase the likelihood that an individual will develop the intention to act. Ajzen (1991) further explains that behavioural intentions, together with perceived behavioural control, can account for substantial variation in actual behaviour. The theory has therefore been widely applied to explain consumer decisions and behavioural intentions. TPB is relevant to influencer marketing because social media content can provide information that shapes consumers' attitudes towards a brand, while the opinions and recommendations of influential individuals can contribute to perceptions of social approval. Recent research supports this connection. For example, Ooi et al. (2023) found that influencer credibility contributes to consumers' attitudes towards influencers and advertised products or services, while these attitudinal responses can subsequently influence purchase behaviour. Similarly, a recent study integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour with influencer persuasion found that trustworthiness and perceived influence can increase consumer involvement with endorsed brands, demonstrating the relevance of attitudinal processes in influencer marketing (2025). Within the context of this study, TPB helps explain how consumers exposed to Globacom's influencer content may develop favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards the brand. Influencers who are perceived as credible and trustworthy may provide information that strengthens positive evaluations of Globacom, while recommendations from socially influential individuals may contribute to consumers' perceptions of what is acceptable or desirable within their social environment. Perceived behavioural control is relevant to the extent that consumers have the resources and opportunity to act on their evaluations, for example, through access to social media and telecommunications services. The theory therefore provides a useful explanation of the relationship between influencer communication, consumer attitudes and behavioural responses.

On the other hand, Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), developed by Bandura (1986), explains human behaviour through the interaction of personal factors, behaviour and the social environment. A central principle of the theory is observational learning, whereby individuals can acquire knowledge, attitudes and behavioural tendencies by observing other people. Bandura (1986) argues that individuals do not learn only through direct experience; they can also learn vicariously by observing the actions and consequences experienced by others. This makes SCT particularly relevant to social media environments, where users continuously observe the opinions, lifestyles and consumption behaviours presented by influencers. Social media influencers can function as models within this process because followers observe how they use, discuss and evaluate products and services. The influence of such models is likely to be stronger when followers perceive them as credible, relatable or similar to themselves. This argument is supported by empirical research showing that influencer credibility and identification are important determinants of consumer responses. Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020), for instance, found that consumers identified more strongly with influencers than with traditional celebrities and that credibility and perceived similarity contributed to endorsement effectiveness. Similarly, Han and Balabanis (2024), in a meta-analysis of 53

studies, found that influencer credibility, trustworthiness and perceived expertise were consistently associated with attitudinal outcomes towards influencers, content and brands. SCT is therefore useful for explaining how consumers may develop perceptions of Globacom through repeated exposure to influencer-generated content. When an influencer demonstrates the use of a service, discusses personal experiences or associates the brand with desirable lifestyles and social activities, followers may observe and evaluate these representations when forming their own perceptions. Social media also provides an interactive environment in which followers can comment, share and discuss influencer content, potentially reinforcing particular

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. The population of the study comprised social media users aged 18–35 years residing in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT). According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the projected population of the FCT was 3,564,126 in the latest year reported in its population projection series. The population was used as the geographical population base for the study, while the specific study population was restricted to social media users aged 18–35 years who had been exposed to social media influencer marketing. sample of 400 respondents was selected using a stratified sampling technique to ensure representation across relevant demographic and social media categories. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered electronically via Google Forms. The instrument was subjected to expert review and pilot testing, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 considered acceptable. Data were analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarise the data, while multiple regression analysis was employed. Statistical significance was tested at the 0.05 level. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality, were observed throughout the study.

Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Types of Social Media Influencers Used by Globacom Nigeria

Type of Influencer	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Micro-influencers	82	21.2
Macro-influencers	125	32.3
Mega/Celebrity influencers	96	24.8
Nano-influencers	39	10.1
Celebrity/Brand ambassadors	45	11.6
Total	387	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings show that macro-influencers (32.3%) were the most commonly identified type used by Globacom Nigeria, followed by mega/celebrity influencers (24.8%) and micro-influencers (21.2%). This suggests that Globacom relies considerably on influencers with relatively large audiences and broad visibility to promote its brand.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of the Effect of Social Media Influencers on Globacom Nigeria's Brand Image

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p)
Constant	0.584	0.176	3.318	0.001
Influencer Credibility	0.412	0.048	8.583	0.000

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p)
Influencer Authenticity	0.351	0.050	7.020	0.000
Audience Reach	0.286	0.045	6.356	0.000
Content Quality	0.243	0.047	5.170	0.000

Model Summary: $R = 0.781$, $R^2 = 0.610$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.606$, $F = 149.438$, $p < 0.001$
The results indicate that social media influencers have a significant positive effect on Globacom Nigeria's brand image. Influencer credibility recorded the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), followed by authenticity ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$), audience reach ($\beta = 0.286$, $p < 0.001$), and content quality ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.001$). The model explains 61.0% of the variation in Globacom's brand image ($R^2 = 0.610$). The significant F-value (149.438, $p < 0.001$) confirms that the overall regression model is statistically significant. This means that effective use of credible, authentic, wide-reaching, and quality influencer content significantly contributes to shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Media Influencers on Consumers' Perception and Attitude toward Globacom

Predictor Variables	B	Std. Error	t-value	Sig. (p)	VIF
Constant	0.621	0.184	3.375	0.001	—
Influencer Credibility	0.386	0.047	8.213	0.000	1.462
Influencer Authenticity	0.318	0.049	6.490	0.000	1.537
Audience Engagement	0.274	0.046	5.957	0.000	1.384
Content Relevance	0.229	0.048	4.771	0.000	1.316

Model Summary: $R = 0.746$, $R^2 = 0.557$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.552$, $F = 120.031$, $p < 0.001$
The regression results indicate that social media influencer characteristics have a significant positive influence on consumers' perception and attitude toward Globacom. Influencer credibility made the strongest contribution ($\beta = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$), followed by authenticity ($\beta = 0.318$), audience engagement ($\beta = 0.274$), and content relevance ($\beta = 0.229$). The model explains 55.7% of the variation in consumers' perception and attitude. The significant F-value (120.031, $p < 0.001$) confirms that the regression model is statistically significant. Thus, credible, authentic, engaging and relevant influencer content is associated with more favourable consumer perceptions and attitudes toward Globacom.

Table 4: Challenges Associated with the Use of Social Media Influencers

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High cost of influencer services	112	28.9
Lack of influencer credibility/authenticity	86	22.2
Difficulty measuring campaign effectiveness	67	17.3
Negative publicity from influencer behaviour	63	16.3
Fake followers and low engagement	59	15.3
Total	387	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The findings show that high cost of influencer services (28.9%) was the most prominent challenge, followed by lack of influencer credibility/authenticity (22.2%) and difficulty measuring campaign effectiveness (17.3%). Negative publicity and fake followers were also identified as challenges. These findings suggest that although influencer marketing can enhance Globacom's brand image, issues relating to cost, credibility and campaign measurement may limit its effectiveness.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective sought to identify the types of social media influencers used by Globacom Nigeria in promoting its brand among consumers in Abuja. The findings showed that macro-influencers constituted the largest category (32.3%). The predominance of macro-influencers suggests that influencer marketing for Globacom is strongly associated with individuals who possess substantial audience reach and visibility. This finding is consistent with Zhou et al. (2023), who noted that marketers frequently select influencers based on follower numbers and their ability to reach large audiences. However, the present finding also indicates that influencer size should not be considered the only criterion for selection. Schouten, Janssen and Verspaget (2020) found that influencer credibility and the degree of fit between the influencer and the promoted product can significantly affect advertising effectiveness. Therefore, while the relatively high proportion of macro and celebrity influencers suggests that Globacom values broad visibility, effective influencer selection should also consider credibility, relevance and compatibility with the brand.

The second objective examined the effect of social media influencers on Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja. The regression results demonstrated that influencer credibility, authenticity, audience reach and content quality all had significant positive effects on brand image. Credibility produced the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.412$, $p < 0.001$), followed by authenticity ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$), audience reach ($\beta = 0.286$, $p < 0.001$), and content quality ($\beta = 0.243$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 61.0% of the variation in Globacom's brand image ($R^2 = 0.610$) and was statistically significant ($F = 149.438$, $p < 0.001$). The implication is that consumers' evaluation of Globacom is influenced considerably by how credible and authentic the influencers promoting the brand are, as well as by the reach and quality of their content. This finding agrees with Lou and Yuan (2019), who found that influencer credibility and the quality of influencer-generated content can strengthen consumers' trust in branded posts. It is also consistent with Audrezet, de Kerviler and Moulard (2020), who emphasised authenticity as a critical factor in maintaining followers' trust when influencers engage in commercial partnerships. Schouten et al. (2020) similarly found that influencer credibility contributes to advertising effectiveness. The present finding therefore reinforces the view that Globacom's brand image is more likely to benefit when influencers are credible, authentic and capable of communicating the brand in a convincing manner.

The third objective assessed the extent to which social media influencers influence consumers' perception and attitudes toward Globacom Nigeria's brand in Abuja. The results showed that influencer credibility had the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$), followed by authenticity ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.001$), audience engagement ($\beta = 0.274$, $p < 0.001$) and content relevance ($\beta = 0.229$, $p < 0.001$). Collectively, these variables explained 55.7% of the variation in consumers' perceptions and attitudes ($R^2 = 0.557$), while the significant regression model ($F = 120.031$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that the relationship was statistically significant. These findings suggest that consumers are not influenced simply because Globacom appears in influencer content; rather, their responses depend on whether the influencer is considered trustworthy, authentic, engaging and relevant. This finding is supported by Lou and Yuan (2019), who demonstrated that influencer credibility and the informational value of influencer content contribute to consumers' trust and brand-related responses. Schouten et al. (2020) similarly found that influencer credibility and identification can positively affect consumers' responses to endorsed products. The result also corresponds with Audrezet et al. (2020), who argued that perceived authenticity is central to sustaining an influencer's persuasive relationship with followers.

The fourth objective examined the challenges associated with the use of social media influencers in shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image in Abuja. The findings showed that high influencer service costs represented the most prominent challenge (28.9%). The results indicate that influencer marketing, despite its potential benefits, involves financial, measurement and reputational risks. The prominence of credibility and authenticity concerns is particularly important because inappropriate influencer behaviour may be transferred to the brand being promoted. This observation is consistent with Audrezet et al. (2020), who noted that commercial partnerships can create tensions around influencers' perceived authenticity. Similarly, Zhou et al. (2023) highlighted the problem of fake followers and cautioned against using follower numbers alone as an indication of an influencer's actual influence.

Conclusion

This study concludes that social media influencers play a significant role in shaping Globacom Nigeria's brand image among consumers in Abuja. The findings show that influencer credibility, authenticity, audience reach, content quality, engagement and relevance positively influence consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards the brand. Credibility emerged as the strongest factor, showing the importance of using influencers who are trusted and genuine. However, the use of influencers also presents challenges, including high costs, credibility concerns, difficulty measuring campaign effectiveness, negative publicity and fake followers. Therefore, Globacom Nigeria should carefully select credible and relevant influencers, monitor their activities and evaluate campaign performance. A strategic approach to influencer marketing can help the company strengthen its brand image and maintain positive consumer relationships in Abuja.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Globacom Nigeria should adopt a balanced influencer strategy that combines macro, mega/celebrity, micro and nano-influencers.
2. Globacom Nigeria should prioritise credible and authentic influencers when promoting its brand. Influencers selected for campaigns should have a positive public image and demonstrate trustworthiness, professionalism and consistency with the values of Globacom.
3. Globacom Nigeria should encourage influencers to create engaging and relevant content that reflects the interests and needs of consumers in Abuja. Rather than relying only on direct advertisements, influencers should be encouraged to use relatable experiences, demonstrations and interactive content.
4. Globacom Nigeria should establish a proper system for managing and evaluating influencer campaigns. The company should carefully assess influencers before engagement to identify fake followers, low engagement and potential reputational risks.

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