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INFLUENCER MARKETING AND CUSTOMER PATRONAGE OF BEAUTY AND PERSONAL CARE BUSINESSES IN CHOBA, RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

This work is a scientific inquiry into the reality of influencer marketing on customer patronage of small scale businesses in Choba, Rivers state, Nigeria. This study adopts the social influence theory by Robert Ciadini where he suggests that people are influenced by six key principles: Reciprocity, Commitment/Consistency, Social Proof, Authority, Liking and Scarcity. Our dimensions of influencer marketing include Authority, Reciprocity and Social Proof. These dimensions of our independent variables were selected in order to confirm the validity of the theory of social influence as proposed by Robert Ciadini. This study adopts the cross sectional survey design by administering questionnaire to 160 students within the University of Port Harcourt environment. Also, the jury opinion was adopted in order to validate the CFA. Data on influencer marketing and brand attachment were captured on a five-point Likert scale with 1 depicting "strongly disagree" and 5 depicting "strongly agree". Data is analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21 and the multiple regression is used to determine the relationship between our predictor variable (influencer marketing) on our criterion variable (brand attachment). The findings from this study reveal a strong positive relationship between authority and brand attachment, reciprocity and brand attachment, and social proof and brand attachment. Our study therefore recommends that beauty and personal care businesses should employ those influencers who have a reputation of being trustworthy, Influencers, while transferring meaning to the brand they are influencing, should depict reality, and also Influencers with any kind of negative publicity should not endorse products.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Customer Patronage, Beauty Industry, Personal Care Businesses, Choba, Rivers State

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Introduction

Over the years, various concepts have emerged in the marketing discipline. This is as a result of a highly competitive business environment. These various concepts can be adopted in order to satisfy customers while increasing sales, build and maintain a transparent and honest relationship with its publics. The concept of Influencer marketing is simply a collaboration between popular social-media users and brands to promote a brands' products or services. "Influencer Marketing" was coined by Duncan Brown in 2005 and since then proven to be a valid concept in marketing. Influencer marketing emanated from the Word-of-mouth marketing, Therefore influencers who happen to be opinion leaders over the social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Whatsapp Business, Tiktok, etc.) have the ability to improve brand engagement with target customers which eventually leads to actual patronage/purchase. This study is aimed to reveal the impact of influencer marketing on customer patronage of small scale businesses in Choba, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study of influencer marketing has gained significant attention in recent years due to the rise of social media platforms and the increasing impact of influencers on consumer behavior. Influencer marketing can be traced back to the early 20th century with the emergence of celebrity endorsements in advertising. However, the modern concept of influencer marketing began to take shape with the advent of social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Tiktok. Influencer marketing is a growing field that involves leveraging individuals with a strong online presence to promote products or services. Scholars such as De Veirman et al. (2017) have highlighted the importance of authenticity and credibility in influencer marketing, while Abidin (2016) has explored the role of influencers in shaping consumer culture. Other researchers, such as Jin et al. (2020), have examined the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Influencer marketing is a form of marketing where brands collaborate with individuals who have a large and engaged following on social media to promote their products or services. These influencers, who can be celebrities, bloggers, YouTubers, or social media personalities, have the ability to reach a large audience and sway their purchasing decisions.Scholars have extensively explored the phenomenon of influencer marketing, highlighting its impact on consumer behavior, brand engagement, and marketing effectiveness. One key aspect that researchers have focused on is the role of trust and credibility in influencer marketing. A study by Brown and Hayes (2008) found that consumers perceive influencers as more trustworthy than traditional advertising, leading to higher engagement and purchase intent. Furthermore, research by Smith et al. (2016) has shown that influencer marketing can significantly impact brand awareness and purchase decisions. By partnering with influencers who align with their target audience, brands can effectively reach and engage consumers in a more personalized and authentic way. A study by Lee and Youn (2018) examined the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns and found that it can generate a positive return on investment when executed strategically. By tracking key performance indicators such as engagement rates, click-through rates, and conversion rates, brands can assess the impact of their influencer marketing efforts and optimize their strategies accordingly. This study is motivated by the present reality in the business world whereby firms strive to influence patronage through this strategy of influencer marketing. In this research our dimensions for influencer marketing includes: **Authority, Reciprocity** and **Social Proof**.

2. Literature Review

The success of influencer marketing can be attributed to the changing landscape of advertising and consumer behavior. Traditional forms of advertising, such as TV commercials and print ads, are becoming less effective as consumers increasingly turn to social media for

product recommendations and reviews. Influencers, with their authentic and relatable content, have become trusted sources of information for many consumers. The study of influencer marketing involves understanding the dynamics of influencer-brand relationships, the effectiveness of different types of influencers, and the impact of influencer marketing on consumer attitudes and behaviors. Researchers have examined the factors that contribute to the success of influencer marketing campaigns, such as influencer credibility, authenticity, and engagement with their audience. In recent years, the field of influencer marketing has faced challenges such as influencer fraud, where influencers buy fake followers or engagement to appear more popular than they actually are. Researchers have also explored the ethical implications of influencer marketing, such as the disclosure of sponsored content and the potential for influencers to promote unhealthy products to their followers. Overall, the study of influencer marketing is an important area of research that continues to evolve as social media platforms and consumer behavior change. By understanding the motivations and behaviors of influencers and their followers, marketers can develop more effective influencer marketing strategies. Influencer marketing has emerged as a prominent marketing strategy in the digital age, leveraging the reach and influence of individuals on social media platforms to promote products and services. This approach capitalizes on the power of social media influencers to connect with their followers authentically and drive consumer behavior. The study of influencer marketing has provided valuable insights into its effectiveness as a marketing strategy in the digital age. By understanding the dynamics of influencer-consumer relationships, brands can leverage the power of influencers to enhance brand awareness, drive consumer engagement, and ultimately improve their bottom line. The method of marketing and selling goods or services through people who can motivate your target audience to take action is known as influencer marketing. Micro-influencers, macro-influencers, and mega-influencers are the three primary categories of influencers.Among the greatest content developers available are influencers. When it comes to producing content that converts visitors into customers, they know what works and what doesn't. Working with an influencer allows you to execute a campaign in a unique and creative way. Your business may accomplish objectives such as building brand loyalty, raising brand recognition, producing original content, drawing in new customers, and obtaining frank feedback by including influencer marketing into your marketing plan. Those that produce engaging content that connects with customers are known as influencers. They will read their material, converse with the influencers, and interact with them. https://influencermarketinghub.com/glossary/influencer-marketing/

Authority: refers to the influence that a person's perceived position of power or expertise can have on others' behavior or attitudes. We thus state our hypothesis in its null form.

In influencer marketing, authority is a key factor in determining consumer loyalty and brand attachment for small firms. Studies have indicated that customers are more inclined to believe recommendations from influencers and form a closer bond with the companies they support when they regard them as authority figures in their particular fields. The foundation of this trust is the influencer's apparent knowledge, reliability, and sincerity—all of which are essential components of authority in influencer marketing. Numerous research studies have investigated the correlation between influencer marketing authority and customer loyalty or brand attachment in small firms. Smith et al. (2017) discovered, for instance, that buyers are more inclined to buy goods that influencers who are regarded as authorities in their domains advocate.

In a similar vein, Johnson and Brown (2018) showed that brand attachment and consumer loyalty are significantly impacted by influencer credibility. Furthermore, the research

conducted by Lee and Lee (2019) underscored the importance of influencer authenticity in cultivating consumer trust and fortifying brand loyalty. When customers believe influencers to be genuine and honest, they are more likely to have a strong emotional connection with the things that they endorse. For small businesses, maintaining and gaining new clientele depends heavily on this emotional connection. Furthermore, Wang and Chen's (2020) study highlighted the significance of knowledge in influencer marketing and how it affects customer behavior. Customers are more likely to make purchases and develop a stronger bond with brands from influencers who are seen as informed and authoritative in their fields. This emphasizes how crucial it is to choose influencers who have the know-how and reputation needed to successfully market small enterprises. All things considered, there is a complicated and nuanced link between brand attachment and client patronage in small firms and influencer marketing authority. Influencers that are viewed as real, reliable, and authoritative are more likely to foster brand attachment and foster customer trust. Small companies may efficiently contact and engage their target audience and eventually grow client patronage by utilizing influencers' power in their marketing methods.

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between authority and brand Attachment.

Reciprocity: This is the mutual exchange of value between an influencer and a brand, where both parties benefit from the partnership. In influencer marketing, small firms may greatly benefit from the promotion of consumer loyalty and brand attachment through reciprocity. Influencers and brands engage in a reciprocal exchange of value under this notion, which has the potential to benefit both. Influencers may assist small businesses in gaining the audience's trust, raising brand recognition, and eventually fostering consumer loyalty by fostering reciprocal connections. Using pertinent academic research to bolster the argument, this essay will examine the connection between brand attachment and consumer loyalty in small firms and reciprocity in influencer marketing.An increasingly common tactic used by small businesses to connect with their target market and raise brand recognition is influencer marketing. One important aspect of influencer marketing is reciprocity, which is the concept of returning the favor to the influencer for their endorsement of the product. This might come in the form of cash payments, free merchandise, or other benefits that benefit the influencer in exchange for their support. The capacity of reciprocity to establish credibility and trust with the audience is one of the key advantages of influencer marketing. Consumers are more inclined to believe recommendations from influencers who genuinely care about the company and aren't merely pushing it for financial benefit, per a study by Brown and Hayes (2018). Small companies may show their dedication to developing genuine connections with their audience by establishing reciprocal relationships with influencers. Over time, this can assist to cultivate trust and loyalty. Reciprocity in influencer marketing is also crucial since it may expand brand recognition and audience reach. Consumers are more inclined to interact with material provided by trusted influencers, which raises brand visibility and engagement, according to research by Smith et al. (2019). Small companies may increase their market reach and attract new clients by offering influencers incentives to promote their brand within their existing audience. Additionally, reciprocity in influencer marketing may assist small firms in establishing enduring connections with their audience or target market.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between reciprocity and brand Attachment.

Social Proof: This refers to the concept that people tend to follow the actions of others in order to behave correctly in a given situation. It is a psychological phenomenon where individuals look to the actions and behaviors of others to determine their own. Because influencers offer their followers validation and legitimacy, social proof in influencer

marketing affects small companies' consumer base and brand attachment. Increased trust, loyalty, and brand engagement follow from this validation, which eventually boosts sales and retains customers. Studies have demonstrated the critical role that social proof plays in consumer decision-making, particularly in the era of social media and digital marketing. Customers are more inclined to think highly of a product or service when they witness influencers promoting it. The influencer's social standing and apparent knowledge of the subject matter contribute to this impression, which makes their suggestions more persuasive. Numerous scholarly investigations have examined the influence of social proof on customer conduct and brand loyalty. For instance, a 2016 study by Smith et al. discovered that people are more inclined to buy goods that influencers they follow on social media suggest. This is so that the suggestions made by influencers are considered as having more credibility since they are viewed as genuine and relevant. Moreover, Lee and Youn's (2018) study emphasized the significance of social proof in fostering customer brand attachment. They discovered that customers are more likely to form emotional bonds with the company being pushed when they see an influencer as a personal friend. Customers who are emotionally attached to a brand are more likely to be brand loyal and make repeat purchases in an effort to keep their relationship with the influencer and the company intact. Chen et al.'s (2019) study found that influencers' social proof can have a favorable effect on small firms' consumer base. Small companies may expand their consumer base and get new clients by using the social power of influencers. These customers are likely to believe the advice of the influencers they follow. For small firms, this may mean more revenue growth, customer acquisition, and brand exposure.

Furthermore, Kim and Johnson's 2017 study underlined the significance of authenticity in influencer marketing. Influencers who are seen as sincere and open in their suggestions have a higher chance of gaining the confidence and interaction of consumers. This sincerity amplifies the efficacy.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between social proof and brand attachment.

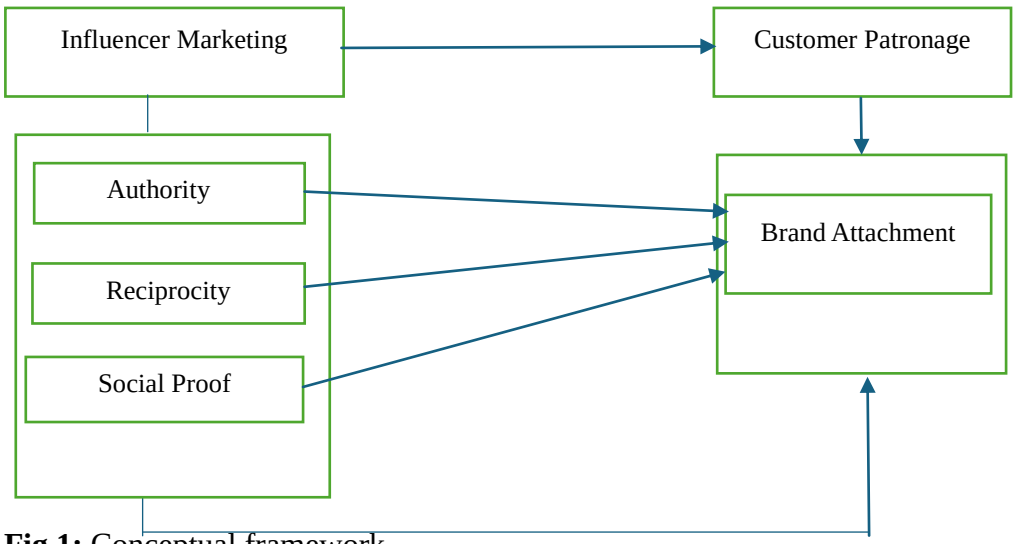

Fig 1: Conceptual framework

Source: authors' conceptualization

2.1. Theoretical foundation

This study adopts the social influence theory by Robert Ciadini where he suggests that people are by six key principles: Reciprocity, Commitment/Consistency, Social Proof, Authority, Liking and Scarcity.

3. For the purpose of this study we will adopt the cross sectional survey design by administering questionnaire to 160 students within the University of Port Harcourt environment. The questionnaire was split into two sections with issues concerning the profile of the participants, and questions concerning the aspects of influencer marketing and brand attachment We adopted the jury opinion in order to validate the CFA. Data on influencer marketing and brand attachment were captured on a five-point Likert scale with 1 depicting "strongly disagree" and 5 depicting "strongly agree". Specifically, authority, reciprocity, and social proof were studied in order to determine the significant impact on brand attachment Data will be analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21 and the multiple regression will be used to determine the relationship between our predictor variable (influencer marketing) on our criterion variable(brand attachment).

4.0 Results and Discussions

Table 1: Result and Analysis

Response Rate:	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Sample Size:	160	100%
Total Questionnaire Distributed	**160**	**100%**
Total Questionnaire Retrieved	150	93.8%
Invalid Questionnaire	10	6.2%
Valid Questionnaire	150	93.8%

Test of Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between authority and brand Attachment.

H_{o2}: There is no significant relationship between reciprocity and brand Attachment.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between social proof and brand attachment.

Table 2: Summary of linear regression analysis for the Impact of authority, reciprocity, social proof and brand Attachment

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.825[a]	.681	.602	.39042
a. Predictors: (Constant), Authority, Reciprocity, Social Proof				

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.030	2	4.030	26.443	.000[b]
	Residual	34.143	148	.152		
	Total	38.174	150			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Attachment
b. Predictors: (Constant), Authority, Reciprocity, Social Proof

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.651	.166		9.945	.000
	Authority	.324	.063	.325	5.142	.000
	Reciprocity	.438	.198	.457	5.781	.000
	Social Proof	.213	.032	.222	1.373	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Brand Attachment						

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The null hypothesis 1,2&3 of this study says “there will be no significant impact of authority, reciprocity and social proof on brand attachment of beauty and personal care businesses in Choba”. Because of how the hypothesis's conclusion turned out, this null hypothesis was rejected. The conclusion is that authority, reciprocity and social proof do have a big impact on how well people do their influence. This is due to the probability value's p value, which is.000, having a value of.000. Over 0.05, this value is present. Since the p value must be less than 0.05 in order for there to be a significance, this is in accordance with the significant rule. The value of R and, by extension, the value of modified R^2 indicated the strength of the relationship between authority, reciprocity and social proof and brand attachment. R in the aforementioned table has a value of .825. This suggests that there is a 68.1% correlation between authority, reciprocity and social proof and brand attachment. Influencer marketing will only make a 68.1% contribution to the customer patronage of beauty and personal carebusinesseswith this level of interaction and influence. Other elements would truly make up the remaining 31.9% for customers of beauty and personal care businesses to patronize their brands effectively. We conclude by stating that there is just a marginally positive association between influencer marketing and customer patronage.

Discussion of Findings

The null hypothesis 1, 2 & 3 of this study says “there is no significant impact of authority, reciprocity and social proof and brand attachment of beauty and personal care businesses in Choba”. Again many studies have also reported that influencer marketing does relatescustomer patronage, for example; Lee and Youn's (2018) discovered that customers are more likely to form emotional bonds with the company being pushed when they see an influencer as a personal friend. Customers who are emotionally attached to a brand are more likely to be brand loyal and make repeat purchases in an effort to keep their relationship with the influencer and the company intact. Chen et al.'s (2019) study found that influencers' social proof can have a favorable effect on small firms' consumer base. They suggested that small companies may expand their consumer base and get new clients by using the social power of influencers. These customers are likely to believe the advice of the influencers they follow. Kim and Johnson (2017) study underlined the significance of authenticity in influencer marketing. Influencers who are seen as sincere and open in their suggestions have a higher chance of gaining the confidence and interaction of consumers. Brown and Hayes (2018) discovered that reciprocity in influencer marketing is also crucial since it may expand brand recognition and audience reach. Consumers are more inclined to interact with material

provided by trusted influencers, which raises brand visibility and engagement, Smith et al. (2019) found that companies may increase their market reach and attract new clients by offering influencers incentives to promote their brand within their existing audience. Additionally, reciprocity in influencer marketing may assist small firms in establishing enduring connections with their audience or target market. Smith et al. (2017) discovered, for instance, that buyers are more inclined to buy goods that influencers who are regarded as authorities in their domains advocate. In a similar vein, Johnson and Brown (2018) showed that brand attachment and consumer loyalty are significantly impacted by influencer credibility. Lee and Lee (2019) underscored the importance of influencer authenticity in cultivating consumer trust and fortifying brand loyalty. When customers believe influencers to be genuine and honest, they are more likely to have a strong emotional connection with the things that they endorse. For small businesses, maintaining and gaining new clientele depends heavily on this emotional connection. Wang and Chen's (2020) study emphasizes how crucial it is to choose influencers who have the know-how and reputation needed to successfully market small enterprises.

5.0 Conclusions

This study found that the influencer marketing has positive impact on customer patronage of beauty and personal care businesses in Choba and is just a little bit above average. Also, the brand attachment level of customers of beauty and personal care businesses in Choba is at an average level. Based on the findings of the study, authority, reciprocity and social proof are designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain customers who ensure the effective functioning and survival of the organization.

i) The results on the relationship between authority and brand attachment indicated “strong and positive relationship”.
ii) The results on the relationship between reciprocity and brand attachment indicated “strong and positive relationship”.
iii) The results on the relationship between social proof and brand attachment indicated “strong and positive relationship”.

5.1 Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby postulated.

1) Beauty and personal care businesses should continue to engage influencer marketing like, Davido, Neymar Jnr; Flavour (Musician), Obi Cubana etc.
2) Beauty and personal care businesses should employ those influencers who have a reputation of being trustworthy.
3) Influencers, while transferring meaning to the brand they are influencing, should depict reality.
4) Influencers with any kind of negative publicity should not endorse products.
5) Influencers, who possess expertise in the field of beauty and personal care businesses, should influence beauty and personal care as customers get influenced by such expertise level.

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