

INFLUENCER MARKETING AND FEMALE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF WAIST TRAINERS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, influencer marketing has gained significant prominence as a powerful marketing strategy. This study investigated influencer marketing and female consumer buying behaviour of waist trainers in South East Nigeria with special focus on the challenges and the prospect of such market. The objectives of the study were to: ascertain whether influencer have influence on consumer purchasing decisions of female consumers of waist trainers; examine the strategies influencers use to influence consumers of female waist trainers. The study was anchored on Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 12,003,903 which was drawn from the 2019 projected population of female in South East Nigeria based on the 2006 National Population Census. A sample size of 385 was determined using the Australian Calculator as provided by the National Statistical Service. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. Purposive sampling technique was employed to select the respondents on whom copies of the questionnaire were administered to. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and summarized using frequency tables. Findings showed that majority of the female consumers purchased a waist trainer after seeing it promoted by an influencer on social media. Also, from the study, it was discovered that majority of the respondents have felt pressured to purchase a waist trainer because of influencer marketing tactics. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher among other things recommended that influencers should take into consideration the preferences and perceptions of their audience and promote products with honesty and authenticity. Also, brands should also ensure that their marketing strategies align with the values and expectations of their target audience.

Keywords: Influencer, Marketing, Consumer, Female, Behaviour, Waist trainers.

Introduction

Phua, Jin, and Kim (2017) opine that in this modern era of digital marketing, social media influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour and influencing purchase decisions. Armstrong (2009) confirms that it is difficult for businesses to convince and draw in customers due to their growing mistrust of conventional marketing strategies. Marketers are fighting to find the best way to influence consumers, and marketing techniques where they try to "camouflage" the advertisements have developed. Product placement, content marketing, and influencer marketing are some of the strategies where marketers try to influence consumers without being perceived as noise. Duffett, (2017), opines that influencer marketing refers to the use of influential individuals, commonly known as influencers, to promote products or services through their social media platforms. This form of marketing leverages the influence and credibility of individuals with large social media followings, known as influencers, to promote products or services to their audience (Young, Weiss and Stewart, 2006).

Influencers, who are individuals with a significant following on social media platforms, can sway consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. The process of choosing and encouraging social media influencers to engage their followers to promote a business's offer is known as influencer marketing. Businesses employ people, groups, or virtual avatars to perform services. Social media and other online platforms are used by influencers to expand their networks of followers. Influencer marketing is most exposed to millennials due to their frequent use of social media and the Internet (Jade, 2018). Nisar and Whitehead (2016) argue that from the available data, influencer marketing is seen as a potentially lucrative

approach to acquiring new online customers and is predicted to be growing quickly. However, more research must be done on the subject of influencers, their effects, and their capacity to mold perceptions among particular generations.

According to More & Lingam (2017) influencer marketing is a strategy used by businesses to identify new clients by focusing on important people known as influencers who share the company's beliefs and work in their favour. Influencers can change people's attitudes and behaviours and frequently provide fresh knowledge, which can aid potential buyers in making decisions about what to buy (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). By having influencers endorse their products to customers who already agree with their image or points of view, brands can take advantage of these strong connections (De German, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017). One particular product category that has seen a surge in popularity through influencer marketing is waist trainers. Waist trainers are garments designed to trim the waist and create an hourglass figure, and they have gained significant attention among female consumers seeking to achieve a slimmer waistline. The influence of influencer marketing on female consumer buying behaviour of waist trainers is a topic of growing interest and importance in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) observe that the rise of social media platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok, has created a new avenue for brands to connect with consumers through influencer partnership. By collaborating with influencers who have large and engaged followings, brands can leverage the influencer's credibility and authenticity to promote their products. Waist trainers, which have gained popularity for their purported ability to shape and slim the waist, are a common product category that is heavily promoted by influencers.

Meanwhile, as consumers get increasingly accustomed to and wary of fake influencer marketing operations, this effectiveness has encountered some difficulties (Fashionista, 2019). According to Gerardo (2017), a brand runs the danger of losing its credibility if an influencer lacks trustworthiness. Thus, brand managers have to deal with more than just inauthenticity; they also need to spot unscrupulous influencers who claim to have phony followers or inflated engagement rates (Mediakix, 2019). These difficulties together imply that brands need to go through laborious procedures to identify and work with the right influencers. Once this is accomplished, the influencers must then develop campaigns that look natural to their followers rather than raising red flags about unethical advertising. Accordingly, it may be argued that influencer marketing has a greater potential to affect consumer behaviour than traditional celebrity advertising (Evans et al., 2017; Müller et al., 2018). This is especially true if the relationship between the influencer, product, and followers is highly congruent. It is suggested that followers assess endorsed companies or items as more consistent with their tastes or image if they seem consistent with the influencer. This helps followers avoid cognitive dissonance. Alternatively, followers are inclined to disregard the promoted product as inconsistent with themselves if it appears to be at odds with what they know about the influencer (Gupta, Kishor, and Verma, 2017).

Understanding the influence of influencer marketing on female consumer buying behaviour of waist trainers is crucial for both marketers and consumers alike. For marketers, this knowledge can inform their strategies for engaging with their target audience and driving sales through influencer collaborations. By identifying the key factors that drive female consumers to purchase waist trainers based on influencer recommendations, marketers can tailor their campaigns to better

resonate with their target demographic and enhance their brand's visibility and credibility.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for brands to reach and engage with their target audience in a more authentic and relatable way. Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful marketing strategy in the beauty industry. With the evolution of social media and the increasing reliance on online recommendations, influencers have become key opinion leaders in shaping consumer behaviour and purchasing decision. Consumers perceive influencers as trustworthy sources of information and value their opinions when making decisions related to beauty products. Influencer marketing is becoming a more popular tool used by marketers to advertise their brands and goods on social media sites. The study seeks to investigate influencer marketing and female consumer buying behaviour of waist trainers in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospect.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is investigate how influencer marketing has impact on the purchasing decisions of female consumers of waist trainers. Specifically, the study is meant;

1. To ascertain whether influencer have influence on consumer purchasing decisions of female consumers of waist trainers.
2. To ascertain the strategies influencers use to influence consumers of female waist trainers
3. To find out if there are other factors apart from influencers that affect consumer buying behavior of waist trainers.

Research questions

1. Do social media influencer have influence on consumer purchasing decisions of female consumers of waist trainers?
2. What are the strategies that social media influencers use to influence consumers of female waist trainers?
3. Are there other factors apart from social media influencers that influence consumer buying behavior of waist trainers?

Review of Related Literature

Marketing Concepts

- I. **Marketing Mix:** The marketing mix is a foundational concept in marketing that consists of the 4 Ps - Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. This framework helps businesses design their marketing strategies by considering how to best to manage these elements to meet customer needs and achieve organizational goals (Erz and Christensen, 2018).
- II. **Consumer Behaviour:** Understanding consumer behaviour is crucial for marketers to develop effective marketing strategies. The literature on consumer behaviour explores the psychological, social, and cultural factors that influence how consumers make purchasing decisions (Jin, Muqaddam and Ryu, 2019).
- III. **Market Segmentation:** Market segmentation involves dividing a heterogeneous market into smaller, more homogeneous segments based on characteristics such as demographics, psychographics, and behaviour. This allows marketers to tailor their strategies to the specific needs and preferences of different consumer groups (Lou and Yuan, 2019).
- IV. **Branding and Positioning:** Branding is a key aspect of marketing that involves creating a distinctive identity for a product or service. Positioning, on

the other hand, refers to how a brand is perceived in the minds of consumers relative to competitors. The literature on branding and positioning explores strategies for building strong brands and establishing a competitive advantage (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2019).

Influencer Marketing

In recent years, influencer marketing has gained significant prominence as a powerful marketing strategy, particularly in the beauty industry. Influencer marketing involves leveraging individuals who have a strong online presence and a dedicated following on platforms such as social media, blogs, or YouTube channels to promote products and services. This marketing approach has evolved and becomes increasingly significant, revolutionizing the way brands connect with consumers and impacting their behaviour and purchasing decisions. Influencers are seen as more relatable and trustworthy compared to traditional advertising, making their endorsements more persuasive (Abidin, 2016).

The evolution of influencer marketing can be attributed to the rise of social media platforms and the shift in consumer behaviour toward seeking recommendations and opinions from trusted individuals online. Initially, celebrity endorsements dominated the marketing landscape, but the advent of social media, everyday individuals gained the ability to amass substantial followings and cultivate their brands. These social media influencers have become influential figures in their respective niches, including the beauty industry (Chen, Smith and Taylor, 2019).

Influencer marketing holds significant relevance in the beauty industry due to its unique ability to engage with consumers on a personal level (Ki et al., 2020). Studies have indicated that consumers perceive influencers as relatable and trustworthy sources of information, valuing their opinions and recommendations

on beauty products (Abraham et al., 2022). The impact of influencers on consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions has been extensively explored in research.

Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful marketing strategy in the beauty industry. With the evolution of social media and the increasing reliance on online recommendations, influencers have become key opinion leaders in shaping consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. Consumers perceive influencers as trustworthy sources of information and value their opinions when making decisions related to beauty products (De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders, 2017).

Consumer Buying Behaviour

Consumer buying behavior refers to the process through which individuals make decisions about purchasing goods or services. It is influenced by a variety of internal and external factors, and understanding these factors is crucial for marketers to effectively engage with consumers.

- i. **Decision-Making Process:** The consumer decision-making process typically involves several stages, including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Johnson and Brown, 2018).
- ii. **Psychological Factors:** Consumer behavior is influenced by a range of psychological factors, such as motivation, perception, attitudes, and personality. These factors shape how individuals interpret information, evaluate products, and make purchasing decisions.
- iii. **Social Factors:** Social influences also play a significant role in consumer buying behavior. This includes reference groups, family, social class, and culture, which can impact an individual's attitudes, preferences, and purchasing decisions (Kim and Johnson, 2017).

- iv. **Online Consumer Behavior:** The rise of e-commerce has led to a growing body of literature on online consumer behavior. This includes topics such as online shopping behavior, trust and security concerns, and the impact of online reviews and ratings on purchase decisions (Lee and Youn, 2018).

Female Consumer Buying Behaviour of Waist Trainers

Studies have shown that women are more likely to be influenced by social media influencers compared to men. Women are more active on social media platforms and tend to follow influencers who share similar interests and lifestyles. This creates an opportunity for brands to target female consumers through influencer partnerships, particularly for products like waist trainers that cater to women's beauty and fitness goals. The popularity of waist trainers has surged in recent years, driven in part by celebrity endorsements and influencer marketing. Celebrities like Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner have been known to promote waist trainers on their social media accounts, leading to increased consumer interest in the product. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing on female consumer buying behavior of waist trainers has not been extensively studied (Lee, 2019).

The motivations behind women's decision to purchase waist trainers can be multifaceted. One of the primary reasons is the desire for a slimmer waistline and a more defined silhouette. Many women see waist trainers as a quick and easy way to achieve the hourglass figure that is often idealized in society. Additionally, waist trainers are marketed as a tool for weight loss and body shaping, which can appeal to women who are looking to enhance their physical appearance. Another motivation for purchasing waist trainers is the influence of social media and celebrity endorsements. Many influencers and celebrities promote waist trainers on platforms like Instagram, showcasing the supposed benefits of these garments

and creating a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) among their followers. The aspirational lifestyle often associated with waist trainers can drive women to purchase to emulate the look and status of these influencers (Smith, Fischer and Yongjian, 2016).

Women's attitudes towards waist trainers can vary depending on their personal beliefs and experiences. Some women may view waist trainers as a helpful tool for achieving their desired body shape, while others may be skeptical of the effectiveness and safety of these garments. The perception of waist trainers as a temporary fix or a long-term solution can also influence women's attitudes towards them. Cultural and societal norms can also play a role in shaping women's attitudes towards waist trainers. In some cultures, a slim waist and an hourglass figure are highly valued, leading women to see waist trainers as a means of conforming to these beauty standards. On the other hand, body positivity movements and the promotion of self-acceptance may lead some women to reject the idea of using waist trainers to alter their natural body shape (Smith, Johnson and Lee, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

To understand how influencer marketing influences female consumers' buying behaviour of waist trainers, we can turn to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) for valuable insights. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) was developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991 and it proposes that human behaviour is guided by three main factors: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). These factors collectively influence an individual's intention to engage in a particular behavior, which, in turn, predicts the actual behaviour. Let's break down how TPB can be applied to the influence of influencer marketing on female consumer buying behavior of waist trainers:

- i. **Attitudes:** Attitudes refer to an individual's overall evaluation of a particular behavior or product. In the context of waist trainers, influencers play a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes towards the product. Through their curated content, endorsements, and testimonials, influencers can create a positive perception of waist trainers among their female audience. By showcasing the benefits of waist trainers, such as waist slimming and posture improvement, influencers can influence female consumers to develop positive attitudes towards the product (Lou and Yuan, 2019).
- ii. **Perceived Behavioral Control:** Perceived behavioral control relates to an individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior. Influencers can enhance female consumers' perceived behavioral control by providing practical information and guidance on how to use waist trainers effectively. Influencers can empower consumers with the knowledge and confidence to incorporate waist trainers into their daily routine by sharing tips, tutorials, and personal experiences (Smith, Johnson and Lee, 2019).

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is appropriate for this study because it enables the researcher to gather data on the attitudes, perceptions and opinions of the participants in a research work. The population of the study is 12,003,903 which was drawn from the 2019 projected population of female in South East based on the 2006 National Population Census. The sample size for this study is 385, this was determined using Australian calculator. The Australian Calculator was employed, using a confidence level of

95% and precision level of 0.05(5%). The study employed purposive sampling technique. The instrument of data collection was structured questionnaire. The area of the study are Ebonyi, Abia, Imo, Enugu and Anambra States. Data was presented in frequency tables and analyzed using simple percentage.

Findings

A total of 385 copies of questionnaire were distributed, and 372 copies were returned, and found usable for analysis.

Table 1: Response on whether they have purchased a waist trainer after seeing in being advertised by an influencer on a social media

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	312	84%
No	46	12%
Not Sure	14	4%
Total	372	100%

Source: field survey 2019

The table indicates that the majority of the respondents (84%) have purchased a waist trainer after seeing it promoted by an influencer on social media. This shows that majority of the females sampled for this study have purchased a waist trainer after seeing it promoted by an influencer on social media.

Table 2: What qualities do you look for in an influencer when considering their recommendation for a waist trainer?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Content	122	33%
Lifestyle	74	20%
Product reviews	104	28%
Tutorials	71	19%
Total	372	100%

Source: field survey 2019

The table shows that content, lifestyle, product reviews and tutorials are the qualities women look for in an influencer when considering their recommendation for a waist trainer.

Table 3: Have you ever felt pressured to purchase a waist trainer because of influencer marketing tactics?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	342	92%
No	30	8%
Total	372	100%

Source: field survey 2019

The table suggests that majority of the respondents (92%) have felt pressured to purchase a waist trainer because of influencer marketing tactics.

Table 4: Which factors used by influencers affect your perception on purchase of waist trainers?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Brand image	96	26%
Discount and offers	87	23%
Price	85	23%
Quality	104	28%
Total	372	100%

Source: field survey 2019

The table shows that the factors used by influencers to affect the perception of respondents to purchase waist trainers are; brand image, discount and offers, price and quality.

Table 5: What do you trust in case of influencer marketing on endorsement of waist trainers?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Online reviews by consumer	150	40%

Promotion by companies	44	12%
Recommendation by influencers	114	31%
Recommendations by friends	64	17%
Total	372	100%

Source: field survey 2019

The table indicates that what the respondents trust in case of influencer marketing on endorsement of waist trainers are: online reviews by consumer, promotion by companies, recommendation by influencers and recommendation by friends.

Table 6: How do you think influencers should promote realistic body standards when endorsing waist trainers?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Embracing diversity	96	26%
Avoiding unrealistic standard	128	34%
Engaging in conversation	60	16%
Be mindful of language and imagery	88	24%
Total	372	100%

Source: field survey 2019

The table implies that the ways influencers should promote realistic body standards are; embracing diversity, avoiding unrealistic standard, engaging in conversation and being mindful of language and imagery.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the study was that the majority of female consumers purchased a waist trainer after seeing it promoted by an influencer on social media. This finding highlights the importance of influencer credibility and trust when it comes to promoting products. This finding corresponds with the study of Lou & Yueng (2019) that message value and credibility affect consumer trust in branded content.

Female consumers value honest and genuine reviews from influencers who have tried and tested the product, rather than just promoting it for the sake of a paid partnership.

Another significant finding of the study was that majority of the respondents have felt pressured to purchase a waist trainer because of influencer marketing tactics. With the rise of influencer culture and the pressure to achieve an "ideal" body, many female consumers feel compelled to purchase products recommended by influencers, even if they may not necessarily need or want them. This finding agrees with Chatzigeorgiou (2017) that there is a strong influence on the consumers by the influencers who follow them. This highlights the power of influencer persuasion and the need for consumers to be more discerning when it comes to influencer recommendations. When it comes to the factors that influencer marketing can affect their perception of the purchase of waist trainers, female consumers' highlighted quality as the major factor. This further emphasizes the need for influencers to promote and endorse products that are of high quality and deliver the promised results. This finding supports the work of Chen, Smith and Taylor (2019) that the main factors affecting consumer behaviour were advertisement quality and advertisement repetitiveness. With the saturated market of waist trainers, influencers who promote inferior products risk damaging their credibility and losing their followers' trust.

Furthermore, the research study also found that online reviews by consumers influence the female consumer buying behavior of waist trainers. This finding highlights the importance of user-generated content and the impact it has on consumer decisions. The findings from this section supported the views of Kim and Johnson (2017) that social media and online reviews have changed customer

behavior when buying fashion products online. Female consumers value the opinions and experiences of other consumers, which is why brands must encourage and promote positive online reviews.

Lastly, the study's findings revealed that female consumers agreed that the best way influencers should promote realistic body language is by avoiding unrealistic standards. This finding echoes the growing trend of body positivity and the rejection of unrealistic beauty standards. This finding is in line with Abidin (2016) that businesses and brands should reconsider the content they present to their target audience. This is because false presentation and representation could lead to some potential customers being ignored. Female consumers appreciate influencers who promote a healthy and realistic attitude toward body image and encourage self-love and acceptance.

Conclusion

Influencer marketing tactics can create a sense of pressure among female consumers to purchase waist trainers. This can be a cause for concern as it may lead to impulse buying and dissatisfaction with the product. As such, influencers must be mindful of their marketing tactics and ensure that they do not manipulate or exploit their audience. Quality was identified as the main factor that can affect the perception of female consumers towards purchasing waist trainers based on influencer recommendations. This emphasizes the need for influencers to promote products that they truly believe in and have personally tried themselves. By doing so, they can build trust and credibility with their audience, leading to a more positive impact on consumer buying behavior. The role of online reviews was also highlighted in influencing the purchasing behavior of female consumers when it comes to waist trainers. This further reinforces the importance of influencers

providing honest and authentic reviews to their followers. Additionally, brands should also consider investing in review management strategies to ensure that positive reviews are easily accessible to potential customers

Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

1. Influencers take into consideration the preferences and perceptions of their audience and promote products with honesty and authenticity.
2. Brands should also ensure that their marketing strategies align with the values and expectations of their target audience.
3. Organisations should create a more positive and ethical environment for influencer marketing.

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