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PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL INFLUENCER PARTNERSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined public relations strategies for successful influencer partnerships within the Nigerian digital communication environment. Anchored on Source Credibility Theory and Relationship Management Theory, provide explanations for how influencer trustworthiness, expertise, authenticity, and long-term stakeholder relationships shape communication effectiveness. A quantitative survey research design was adopted. The estimated study population is 1,200 respondents made up of public relations practitioners, social media managers, communication professionals, and digital marketing personnel in selected Nigerian media and corporate organizations. A sample size of 300 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane sample size formula while purposive and simple random sampling techniques were employed in selecting participants. Data were collected using a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire validated by communication experts. Reliability was established through Cronbach's Alpha, which produced reliability coefficients above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that strategic influencer selection, content authenticity, transparency, ethical communication, audience engagement, and long-term relationship management significantly influence the success of influencer partnerships. The study concluded that effective influencer partnerships require organizations to move beyond short-term promotional collaborations toward data-driven, ethical, and relationship-based communication strategies. The study recommends that public relations practitioners should adopt comprehensive influencer evaluation frameworks, and establish transparent communication policies, to achieve sustainable digital engagement and protect organizational reputation.

Keywords: Public Relations, Influencer Partnerships, Source Credibility, Relationship Management, Digital Communication, Social Media Influencers, Audience Engagement, Brand Reputation, Nigeria.

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Introduction

The emergence of social media technologies has fundamentally transformed the nature of public relations practice across the world. Traditional public relations relied heavily on one-way communication through conventional media channels such as newspapers, radio, and television. However, the digital communication revolution has introduced interactive platforms that enable organizations to engage directly with audiences, build relationships, and influence public perceptions in real time.

Among the most significant developments in digital communication is the rise of social media influencers individual who possess the ability to shape audience opinions, attitudes, and behaviors through their established credibility, expertise, and relationships with followers. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have enabled influencers to become important intermediaries between organizations and their target audiences. Consequently, contemporary public relations practice has shifted from controlling media messages to developing collaborative relationships with influential online personalities.

Previous studies from Western contexts have demonstrated that successful influencer partnerships depend on authenticity, source credibility, audience alignment, transparency, and strategic relationship management. Studies by Kent and Li (2023), Sokolova and Kefi (2020), and Liu and Zheng (2024) indicate that audiences are more likely to respond positively to influencers perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and relatable. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these strategies may differ across cultural and communication environments, particularly in developing countries where digital media ecosystems continue to evolve.

In Nigeria, the rapid growth of internet penetration, smartphone adoption, and social media usage has increased the reliance of organizations on influencers for brand communication, public awareness campaigns, and reputation management. Nigerian organizations, government agencies, and private institutions increasingly collaborate with influencers to reach diverse audiences. However, challenges such as fake followership, inadequate disclosure of sponsored content, weak strategic planning, and reputational controversies continue to threaten the effectiveness of these partnerships.

Although existing scholarship provides substantial evidence on influencer marketing and digital advertising, there remains limited empirical research focusing specifically on public relations strategies that facilitate successful influencer partnerships within the Nigerian communication context. Most available studies concentrate on consumer purchase intention and brand promotion, with limited attention to strategic communication management, ethical considerations, and long-term organization–influencer relationships.

Therefore, this study examines public relations strategies for successful influencer partnerships with the aim of identifying the strategic factors, ethical practices required to achieve effective and sustainable communication outcomes in Nigeria's evolving digital environment.

Statement of the Problem

The emergence of social media influencers has significantly changed contemporary public relations practice by providing organizations with alternative channels for audience engagement, brand storytelling, and reputation management. As a result, many organizations increasingly integrate influencers into their strategic communication campaigns to improve visibility, credibility, and interaction with target publics. Despite the growing popularity of influencer partnerships, achieving successful collaborations remains a major challenge for public relations practitioners. Many organizations experience ineffective influencer campaigns due to poor influencer selection, lack of alignment between influencers and organizational values, inadequate audience analysis, insufficient transparency, and weak relationship management practices. These shortcomings can reduce campaign effectiveness and negatively affect public trust and organizational reputation.

Furthermore, the digital communication environment presents additional challenges such as fake followership, artificial engagement, misinformation, unethical promotional practices, and inadequate disclosure of sponsored content. Such issues have raised concerns regarding the credibility and authenticity of influencer communication, thereby requiring public relations professionals to adopt more strategic, ethical, and evidence-based approaches in managing influencer relationships. Although previous studies have extensively examined influencer marketing,

consumer behaviour, and purchase intentions, much of the existing literature is concentrated in Western societies. Limited scholarly attention has been devoted to examining influencer partnerships from a public relations perspective within the Nigerian communication environment, particularly regarding how credibility management, audience engagement, transparency, and long-term relationship strategies contribute to sustainable communication outcomes.

This gap in knowledge makes it necessary to investigate the public relations strategies required for developing effective influencer partnerships in Nigeria. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how strategic influencer selection, ethical communication, credibility management practices can improve the effectiveness and sustainability of influencer partnerships.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on public relations strategies that contribute to successful influencer partnerships within the contemporary digital communication environment. Specifically, the study examines the influence of strategic influencer selection, content authenticity, source credibility, audience engagement, transparency, ethical communication on the effectiveness of influencer collaborations. Geographically, the study is limited to public relations practitioners, social media managers, digital communication specialists, and marketing professionals working in selected media organizations, public institutions, and private corporate organizations in Nigeria. The study covers the period from 2019 to 2026, a period characterized by significant expansion of social media use, increased adoption of influencer communication strategies, and rapid transformation of public relations practice through digital technologies.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine public relations strategies for successful influencer partnerships in the Nigerian digital communication environment.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the influence of strategic influencer selection on the success of public relations campaigns.
2. Determine the extent to which content authenticity and influencer credibility contribute to audience trust and campaign effectiveness.

3. Assess the role of transparency and ethical communication in maintaining public confidence in influencer partnerships.

Research Questions

The study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. How does strategic influencer selection influence the success of public relations campaigns?
2. To what extent do content authenticity and influencer credibility influence audience trust and campaign effectiveness?
3. How do transparency and ethical communication affect public confidence in influencer partnerships?

Literature/Empirical Review

The growing integration of influencers into public relations campaigns has generated substantial scholarly interest across communication, marketing, and digital media studies. However, contemporary research argues that successful influencer partnerships depend not merely on the popularity of influencers but on strategic factors such as credibility, authenticity, audience alignment, and ethical communication. Sokolova and Kefi (2020) examined how influencer credibility and parasocial relationships influence consumers' attitudes toward Instagram and YouTube influencers. Their findings showed that trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity significantly influence audience engagement and purchase intentions. The study supports the argument that public relations practitioners should prioritize credible influencers whose values and communication styles align with organizational goals.

Similarly, Kent and Li (2023) conceptualized influencer relations as a strategic public relations process rather than merely a marketing activity. They argued that successful influencer partnerships require careful identification of suitable influencers, continuous relationship maintenance, mutual trust, and strategic communication planning. Their study emphasizes the relevance of relationship-building approaches in achieving sustainable communication outcomes. Liu and Zheng (2024) investigated the persuasive influence of social media influencers on brand credibility and audience responses. Their findings revealed that audiences are more receptive to messages communicated by influencers who demonstrate expertise, transparency, and authenticity.

However, the researchers noted that excessive commercialization of influencer content can reduce audience trust and weaken communication effectiveness.

In another study, Hobbs and Davies (2020) examined the opportunities and risks associated with social media influencers in contemporary public relations practice. The study found that while influencers increase organizational visibility and audience interaction, they also expose organizations to challenges such as misinformation, fake engagement, and reputational damage. This suggests that organizations must establish proper monitoring mechanisms and ethical communication standards when engaging influencers.

Within the African communication environment, the rapid expansion of social media has transformed how organizations interact with publics. Nigerian brands, entertainment industries, government agencies, and corporate institutions increasingly employ influencers to disseminate information, shape public opinion, and strengthen audience relationships. However, concerns regarding authenticity, undisclosed sponsorships, and the use of influencers with inflated online metrics continue to challenge effective public relations practice.

Although existing international studies have provided valuable insights into influencer effectiveness, most of them emphasize consumer behaviour and marketing outcomes rather than strategic public relations management. There is limited empirical evidence examining how Nigerian public relations practitioners select, manage, evaluate, and sustain influencer partnerships. This limitation creates a significant research gap that the present study seeks to address. The review therefore establishes that successful influencer partnerships require a combination of strategic influencer selection, credibility management, transparency, audience engagement, and long-term relationship development. These variables form the foundation upon which the present study is anchored.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Source Credibility Theory and Relationship Management Theory. The two theories provide an appropriate framework for understanding how public relations strategies such as influencer selection, authenticity, transparency, trust, and long-term engagement determine the effectiveness of

influencer partnerships in contemporary digital communication.

Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory was developed by Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley in 1953 during their studies on persuasion and attitude change at Yale University. The theory emerged from research on persuasive communication and sought to explain how the characteristics of a message source influence the acceptance of communication messages by audiences. The central argument of the theory is that the effectiveness of a message depends largely on the perceived credibility of the communicator. A communicator who is considered knowledgeable, honest, and reliable is more likely to persuade audiences and influence their attitudes, opinions, and behavioural intentions. The major dimensions of source credibility include:

1. **Expertise:** Expertise refers to the extent to which a communicator is perceived as knowledgeable, experienced, and competent in a particular area. In influencer partnerships, audiences are more likely to trust influencers who demonstrate adequate knowledge and understanding of the products, services, or social issues they promote.
2. **Trustworthiness:** Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which a communicator is perceived as honest, sincere, and dependable. In digital public relations, audiences often evaluate whether influencers provide genuine opinions or merely promote content for financial benefits.
3. **Attractiveness and Relatability:** Attractiveness refers not only to physical appearance but also to personality, communication style, and the ability of influencers to establish emotional connections with their followers. Influencers who are relatable and engaging are more likely to develop stronger audience relationships.

Strengths of Source Credibility Theory include:

The theory provides a strong explanation of how credibility influences persuasion and audience attitude change.

- It remains highly applicable to contemporary digital communication, where influencers function as important sources of information and opinion.

- It helps public relations practitioners understand the importance of selecting influencers whose expertise, values, and personalities align with organizational goals.
- The theory offers practical guidelines for developing credible and trustworthy influencer communication strategies.

Despite its usefulness, the theory has some limitations:

- It focuses primarily on the characteristics of the communicator and pays less attention to audience differences, cultural influences, and social contexts that may shape message interpretation.
- The theory assumes that audiences make rational judgments regarding credibility, whereas emotions, peer influence, online trends, and entertainment value can also influence audience responses.
- It does not fully explain the interactive and participatory nature of modern social media environments where audiences can also influence communication processes.

The theory is highly relevant to this study because successful influencer partnerships depend greatly on the perceived credibility of influencers. Public relations practitioners must carefully select influencers who demonstrate expertise, honesty, authenticity, and relevance to the target audience. A credible influencer can enhance public trust, improve audience engagement, and contribute to positive organizational reputation. Therefore, Source Credibility Theory provides a theoretical explanation for why influencer selection, authenticity, transparency, and credibility management are essential strategies in successful public relations campaigns.

Relationship Management Theory

Relationship Management Theory was developed by John A. Ledingham and Stephen D. Bruning in the late 1990s as a major public relations approach that emphasizes the establishment and maintenance of beneficial relationships between organizations and their strategic publics. The theory emerged from the recognition that effective public relations should move beyond one-way dissemination of information toward two-way communication, dialogue, mutual understanding, and long-term relationship building. The theory argues that the success of public relations depends on the quality of relationships established between organizations and their publics.

The key dimensions include;

1. **Trust:** Organizations must develop relationships based on honesty, credibility, and reliability. Trust encourages positive perceptions and sustained engagement.
2. **Commitment:** Commitment reflects the willingness of both organizations and stakeholders to maintain valuable and mutually beneficial relationships over time.
3. **Openness:** Openness involves transparency, information sharing, and sincere communication between organizations and their publics.
4. **Mutuality and Satisfaction:** Successful relationships require both parties to experience benefits and satisfaction from the relationship. Effective communication encourages cooperation and long-term loyalty.

Strengths of Relationship Management Theory include:

- It emphasizes two-way communication and active engagement between organizations and their audiences.
- It provides a useful framework for understanding long-term influencer relationships rather than temporary promotional collaborations.
- It recognizes trust, transparency, and mutual benefits as essential elements of successful communication.
- It is highly relevant to social media environments where continuous interaction between organizations, influencers, and followers occurs.

The Weaknesses of Relationship Management Theory are:

- Maintaining quality relationships with multiple stakeholders may require significant time, financial resources, and continuous communication efforts.
- The measurement of relationship quality can be subjective because perceptions of trust and satisfaction differ among individuals.

The theory may not adequately account for situations where organizations prioritize short-term communication objectives over long-term relationship development.

Relationship Management Theory explains that successful influencer partnerships are built on continuous communication, mutual trust, transparency, and shared values between

organizations and influencers. In the Nigerian digital communication environment, organizations that establish long-term relationships with credible influencers are more likely to achieve sustainable audience engagement, strengthen reputation, and improve communication effectiveness. The theory therefore provides a foundation for understanding the importance of ethical communication, audience interaction, and strategic relationship management in influencer partnerships.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative survey research design. The survey design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain systematic information from public relations practitioners, social media managers, digital communication professionals, and marketing personnel regarding their experiences and perceptions of influencer partnership strategies. The design allows the researcher to gather measurable data on variables such as influencer credibility, audience engagement, transparency, ethical communication, and relationship management. The population of the study consists of 1,200 public relations practitioners, social media managers, digital communication specialists, and marketing professionals working in selected media agencies, corporate organizations, and communication firms in Nigeria. The sample size was scientifically determined using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2} \quad n = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.05)^2} = 300$$

Where:

n = required sample size

N = population size (1,200)

e = level of precision (0.05)

Substituting the values:

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.05)^2} = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.0025)} = \frac{1200}{3} = 400$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 1200(0.0025)} = \frac{1200}{3} = 400$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{1 + 3} = \frac{1200}{4} = 300$$

$$n = \frac{1200}{4} = 300$$

Therefore, the sample size for the study is 300 respondents.

The study employs a combination of purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling is used to identify professionals who possess relevant knowledge

and practical experience in public relations and influencer management.

Thereafter, simple random sampling is applied to provide equal opportunity for selected participants within the identified population.

The major instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire designed in line with the research objectives and theoretical variables of the study. The questionnaire consists of close-ended statements measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from **Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1)**. The questionnaire is subjected to face and content validity through evaluation by experts in Mass Communication and Public Relations. Their observations and recommendations are incorporated to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the measurement items.

Reliability is determined through a pilot study using Cronbach's Alpha technique. A reliability coefficient of **0.70 and above** is accepted as evidence that the instrument possesses satisfactory internal consistency and is suitable for the study. Data collected are analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations are used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics such as Pearson Product Moment Correlation are used to examine relationships among the study variables.

A decision benchmark of **3.00** is adopted for interpreting mean scores. Any item with a mean score of 3.00 or above is regarded as accepted, while items with mean scores below 3.00 are considered rejected. The study adheres strictly to ethical principles guiding social science research. Participation is voluntary, and respondents are adequately informed about the purpose of the study before participating. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents are assured, and all information obtained is used strictly for academic purposes.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Response Rate

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. Out of this number, 276 questionnaires were correctly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 92%, while 24 questionnaires were either not returned or were invalid for analysis.

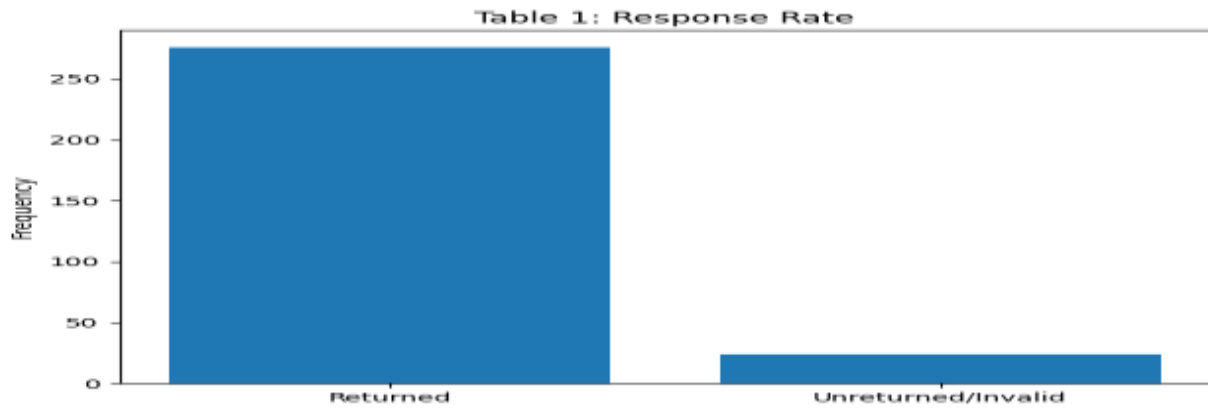
Table 1: Response Rate

Table 1 (Response Rate): The chart shows a high questionnaire return rate (276 responses), representing 92% of the total sample, indicating that the data are adequate for statistical analysis and the generalization of findings.

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Returned Questionnaires	276	92.0
Unreturned/Invalid Questionnaires	24	8.0
Total	300	100

The response rate of 92% is considered adequate for statistical analysis and generalization of findings.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

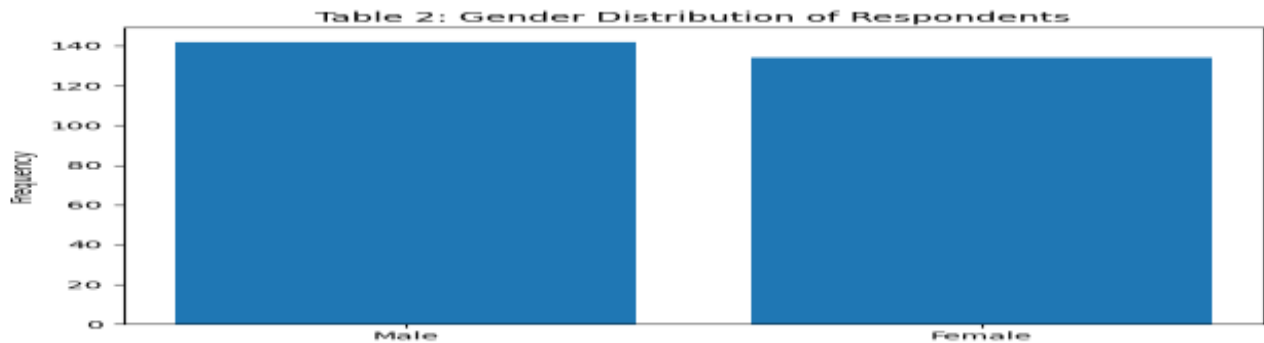


Table 2 (Gender Distribution): The chart illustrates a relatively balanced gender representation among respondents, with males (142) slightly exceeding females (134).

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	142	51.4
Female	134	48.6
Total	276	100

The table shows that 51.4% of respondents were male while 48.6% were female, indicating balanced gender representation.

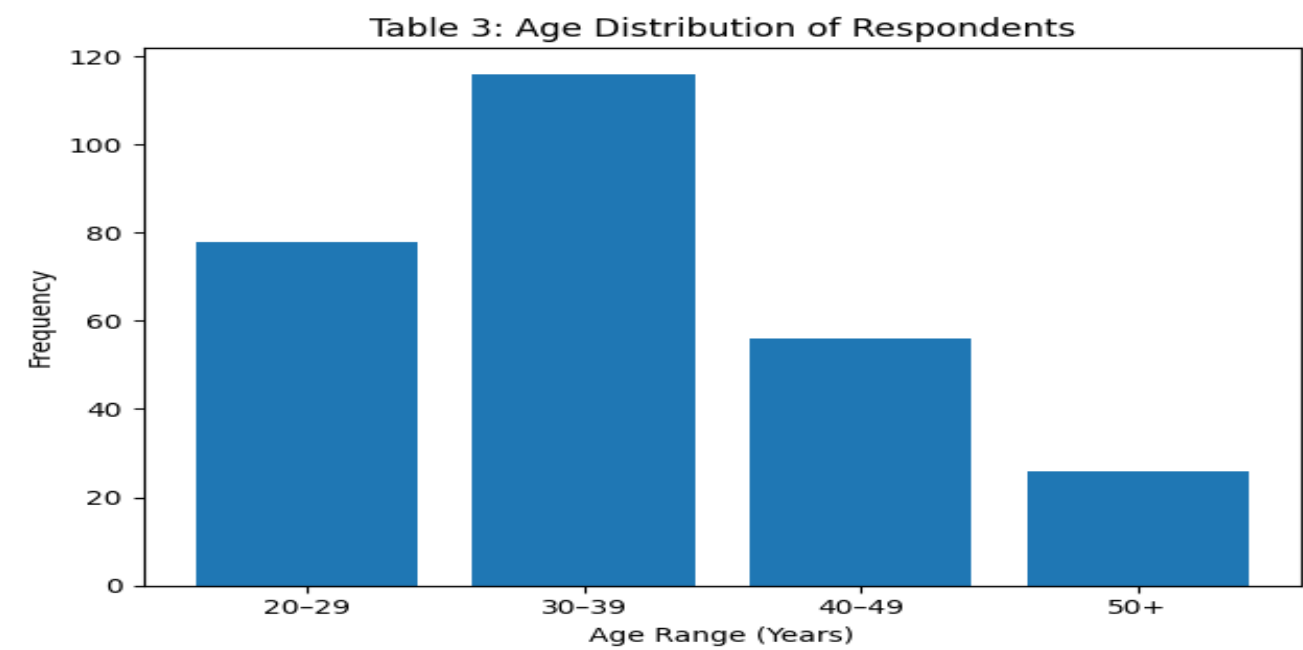


Table 3 (Age Distribution): The largest group of respondents falls within the 30–39 years age bracket (116 respondents), suggesting that the study predominantly captured active professionals within the communication and influencer partnership ecosystem.

Table 3: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20–29 Years	78	28.3
30–39 Years	116	42.0
40–49 Years	56	20.3
50 Years and Above	26	9.4
Total	276	100

The majority of respondents (42.0%) were within the age range of 30–39 years, indicating that most participants were active professionals within the communication industry.

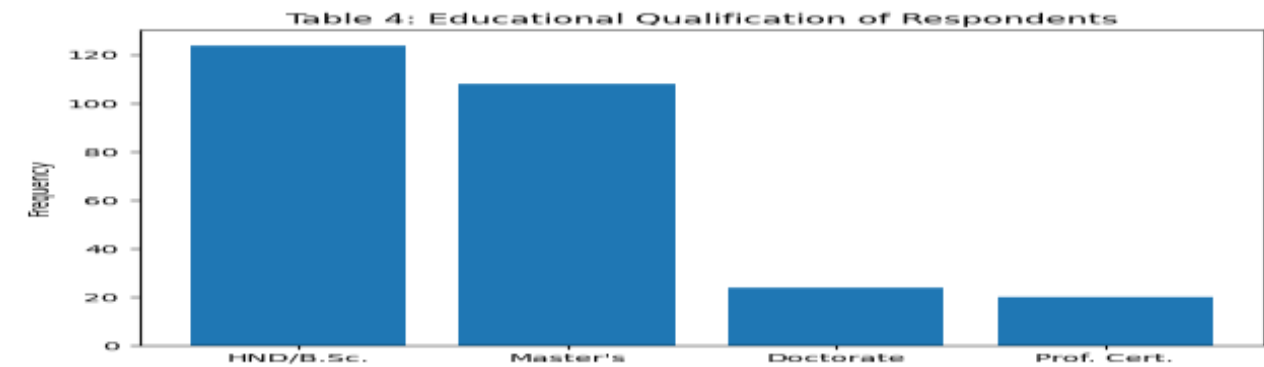


Table 4: The chart indicates that most respondents possess either an HND/B.Sc. (44.9%) or a Master's degree (39.1%), demonstrating that the participants have the educational background necessary to provide informed perspectives on influencer partnership strategies.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
HND/B.Sc.	124	44.9
Master's Degree	108	39.1
Doctorate Degree	24	8.7
Professional Certification	20	7.3
Total	276	100

The table indicates that respondents possessed sufficient educational qualifications to provide informed responses on influencer partnership practices.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One

How does strategic influencer selection influence the success of public relations campaigns?

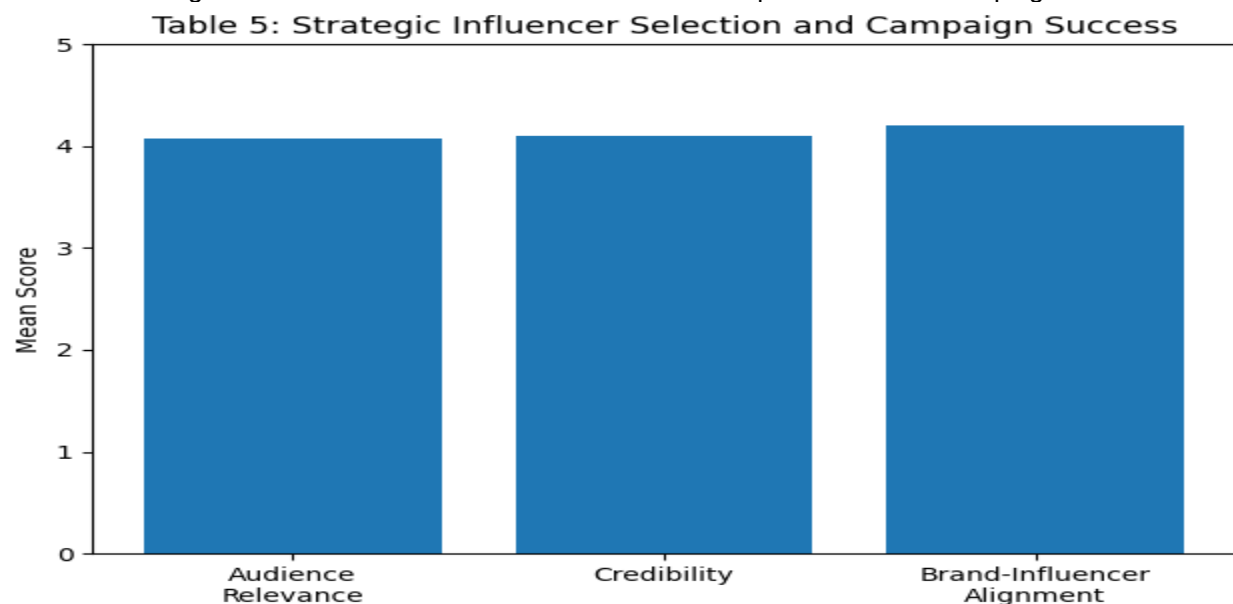


Table 5: The mean scores (4.07–4.20) reveal strong agreement that strategic influencer selection particularly brand–influencer alignment, audience relevance, and influencer credibility positively influences the success of public relations campaigns.

Table 5: Strategic Influencer Selection and Campaign Success

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Influencers should be selected based on audience relevance	126	96	18	20	16	4.07	Accepted
Influencer credibility improves campaign outcomes	132	88	22	18	16	4.10	Accepted
Brand–influencer alignment enhances campaign success	140	92	16	14	14	4.20	Accepted

Grand Mean = 4.12

The findings indicate that strategic influencer selection significantly contributes to campaign effectiveness. Respondents strongly agreed that audience relevance, credibility, and value alignment are critical considerations when selecting influencers.

Research Question Two: To what extent do content authenticity and influencer credibility influence audience trust and campaign effectiveness?

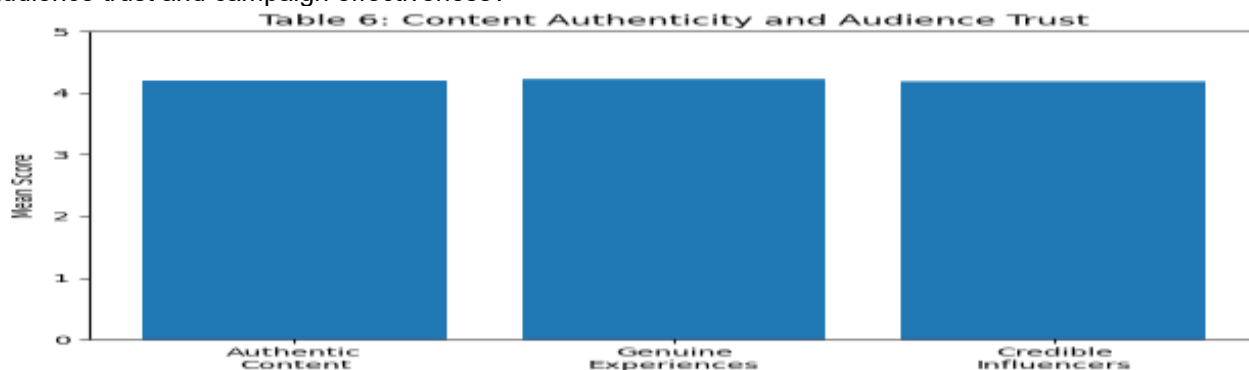


Table 6: The high mean values (4.19–4.23) demonstrate that authentic content, genuine influencer experiences and influencer credibility substantially enhance audience trust and campaign effectiveness.

Table 6: Content Authenticity and Audience Trust

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Authentic content improves audience trust	138	94	18	14	12	4.20	Accepted
Audiences trust influencers who share genuine experiences	144	90	16	14	12	4.23	Accepted
Credible influencers increase campaign effectiveness	136	96	18	14	12	4.19	Accepted

Grand Mean = 4.21

The results demonstrate that authenticity and credibility significantly enhance audience trust and campaign effectiveness.

Research Question Three

How do transparency and ethical communication affect public confidence in influencer partnerships?

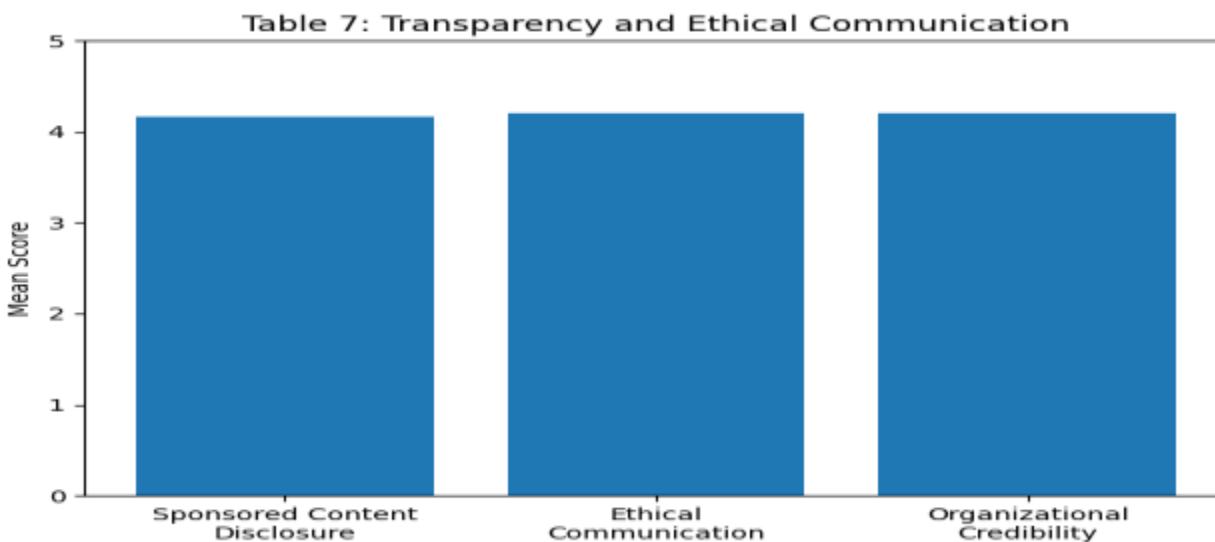


Table 7: The results shows that transparency in sponsored content disclosure, ethical communication practices, and organizational credibility significantly contribute to public confidence in influencer partnerships, with all items recording mean scores above 4.0.

Table 7: Transparency and Ethical Communication

Variables	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	Decision
Disclosure of sponsored content improves audience confidence	132	98	18	16	12	4.16	Accepted
Ethical communication strengthens public trust	140	92	18	14	12	4.21	Accepted
Transparency improves organizational credibility	138	94	16	16	12	4.20	Accepted

Grand Mean = 4.19

The findings suggest that transparency and ethical communication significantly improve public trust and confidence in influencer campaigns.

Test of Hypothesis

Hypothesis One

H0: There is no significant relationship between influencer credibility and successful public relations campaigns.

Table 11: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Influencer Credibility and Campaign Success	0.781	0.000	Reject H0

Decision Rule: Reject the null hypothesis if p-value < 0.05.

Since the calculated p-value (0.000) is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Interpretation

There is a significant positive relationship between influencer credibility and successful public relations campaigns. This implies that higher levels of perceived influencer credibility are associated with greater campaign effectiveness.

Summary of Major Findings

The study revealed that:

- Strategic influencer selection significantly contributes to successful public relations campaigns.
- Content authenticity and influencer credibility enhance audience trust and campaign effectiveness.
- Transparency and ethical communication positively influence public confidence in influencer partnerships.

Discussion of Findings

Influence of Strategic Influencer Selection on Public Relations Campaign Success

The findings of the study revealed that strategic influencer selection significantly contributes to the success of public relations campaigns. The respondents agreed that selecting influencers based on audience alignment, expertise, reputation, and compatibility with organizational

values enhances communication effectiveness. This suggests that the success of influencer partnerships depends not merely on the number of followers an influencer possesses but on the relevance and quality of the relationship between the influencer and the target audience.

This finding is consistent with the study of Kent and Li (2023), who argued that influencer relations should be approached as a strategic public relations function involving careful identification, selection, and continuous management of suitable influencers. The finding also agrees with De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017), who established that influencer characteristics and audience compatibility significantly affect audience attitudes toward brand communication.

The finding supports the assumptions of Source Credibility Theory, which posits that audiences are more likely to accept messages from communicators perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and credible. Therefore, organizations must evaluate influencer expertise, authenticity, and audience relevance before establishing communication partnerships.

Content Authenticity, Credibility, and Audience Trust

The study found that content authenticity and influencer credibility significantly improve audience trust and campaign effectiveness. Respondents indicated that audiences are more receptive to communication messages delivered by influencers who demonstrate honesty, transparency, and

personal relevance. This finding corroborates Sokolova and Kefi (2020), who found that influencer credibility, trustworthiness, and parasocial interaction positively influence audience attitudes and purchase intentions. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) observed that valuable and credible influencer content enhances consumer trust toward branded messages.

The finding further validates the Source Credibility Theory, particularly its dimensions of trustworthiness and expertise. The implication is that organizations should prioritize authentic influencers whose communication style aligns with audience expectations rather than relying solely on popularity or celebrity status.

Transparency, Ethical Communication, and Public Confidence

The findings showed that transparency and ethical communication are essential for maintaining public confidence in influencer partnerships. Respondents agreed that proper disclosure of sponsored content, honesty in communication, and ethical standards enhance audience trust and protect organizational reputation.

This result is in agreement with Waltenrath (2024), who emphasized that transparent disclosure of sponsored influencer content positively affects audience trust and long-term engagement. It also aligns with Hobbs and Davies (2020), who noted that unethical influencer practices, misinformation, and deceptive communication can damage organizational credibility and public relationships.

From the perspective of Relationship Management Theory, transparency and openness are fundamental elements of healthy relationships between organizations and their publics. Therefore, ethical communication strengthens mutual trust and facilitates sustainable engagement between organizations, influencers, and audiences.

Conclusion

This study examined public relations strategies for successful influencer partnerships within the Nigerian digital communication environment. The study established that effective influencer partnerships require more than popularity and online visibility; they require strategic influencer selection, authenticity, credibility, transparency, ethical communication, audience engagement, and long-term relationship management.

The findings demonstrated that credible influencers who maintain authentic relationships

with their audiences contribute positively to organizational reputation and communication effectiveness. The study also confirmed that transparency and ethical practices are essential for sustaining public trust, while continuous engagement strengthens relationships between organizations, influencers, and their target publics. The study therefore validates the assumptions of Source Credibility Theory and Relationship Management Theory, which explain that communication effectiveness depends on the credibility of the message source and the quality of relationships developed among communication stakeholders.

Recommendations

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

- **Strategic Influencer Evaluation:** Public relations practitioners should adopt comprehensive evaluation frameworks that consider influencer expertise, audience demographics, engagement quality, authenticity, and alignment with organizational values before establishing partnerships.
- **Promotion of Authentic Content:** Organizations should allow influencers adequate creative flexibility to produce genuine and relatable content that reflects their personal communication style while maintaining organizational objectives.
- **Strengthening Ethical Communication:** Clear ethical guidelines should be developed to ensure proper disclosure of sponsored content, honesty in communication, and compliance with professional public relations standards.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge in several ways:

- **Theoretical Contribution:** The study extends the application of Source Credibility Theory and Relationship Management Theory to the contemporary Nigerian digital communication environment by demonstrating how credibility, trust, transparency, and relationship-building influence influencer partnership success.
- **Empirical Contribution:** The study provides empirical evidence that strategic influencer selection, authenticity, ethical

communication, audience engagement, and long-term collaboration significantly determine the effectiveness of influencer partnerships.

- Contextual Contribution: Unlike many previous studies conducted in Western societies, this research contributes Nigerian-based evidence on how public relations practitioners manage influencer partnerships within a developing digital media environment.
- Practical Contribution: The study offers strategic recommendations for public relations agencies, corporate organizations, government institutions, and communication professionals on how to develop credible, ethical, and sustainable influencer communication programmes.

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