

Social Media Influencer Marketing and Youth Buying Behaviour: Evidence from Kabwe, Zambia

Kayula Chisanga¹, Mufalali Simasiku Mwiya^{1*}, Regina Muduli¹

¹ Kwame Nkrumah University, Zambia

* Corresponding Author

Article Info

Volume 7, Issue 4

Publication history:

Accepted on 5 May 2026;
Published: 15 August 2026

Key Words:

Social Media Influencer Marketing, Youth Buying Behaviour, Influencer Credibility

Article Doi:

10.59413/ajocs/v7.i4.28

Abstract

Social media influencer marketing has become an increasingly important strategy for engaging young consumers, yet empirical evidence from secondary urban centres in Zambia remains limited. This study examined the relationship between social media influencer marketing and youth buying behaviour in Kabwe, Zambia, focusing on influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality and frequency of exposure. Guided by Source Credibility Theory, the study adopted a quantitative approach using descriptive and explanatory research designs. A sample of 250 youths aged 18–35 years was selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using a structured self-administered online questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression in SPSS version 26. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 245) = 28.641$, $p < .001$, and explained 31.9% of the variance in youth buying behaviour ($R^2 = .319$). Influencer credibility emerged as the only statistically significant predictor of youth buying behaviour ($\beta = .498$, $p < .001$), while influencer attractiveness ($\beta = .007$, $p = .925$), content quality ($\beta = .116$, $p = .104$) and frequency of exposure ($\beta = .102$, $p = .057$) were not statistically significant independent predictors. The findings indicate that youths are more responsive to influencer recommendations when they perceive the influencer as knowledgeable, trustworthy, honest and reliable. The study concludes that credibility is more influential in shaping youth buying behaviour than attractiveness, content quality or repeated exposure. Businesses targeting youths should therefore prioritise credible and trustworthy influencers while using attractive presentation and high-quality content as complementary marketing attributes. The study contributes context-specific evidence to influencer marketing and consumer behaviour literature in Zambia.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of the internet, mobile technologies and digital communication platforms has significantly transformed the contemporary marketing environment and the ways in which businesses communicate and interact with consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kotler et al., 2021; Chaffey, 2022). Social media has evolved from being primarily a platform for interpersonal communication into an important component of consumers' everyday lives and purchasing journeys. Consumers increasingly use social media to communicate, access information, discover products, evaluate alternatives, interact with brands and inform purchasing decisions (Appel et al., 2020; Khanom, 2023; Yang, 2024). Consequently, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X have created an interactive marketing environment in which businesses can reach large audiences, communicate directly with consumers and influence attitudes and consumption behaviour more efficiently than through traditional media alone (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011; Opreana & Vinerean, 2015; Kotler et al., 2021).

The expansion of social media has contributed to the rapid growth of social media influencer marketing as an important digital marketing strategy. Social media influencers are individuals who have developed substantial audiences on digital platforms and possess the capacity to shape the opinions, attitudes and behaviours of their followers through the content they create and share (Freberg et al., 2011; Lou & Yuan, 2019). They include celebrities, bloggers, content creators and other online personalities who establish relationships with followers around particular interests, lifestyles or areas of expertise. Unlike conventional celebrity endorsements, influencers frequently interact directly with their followers and integrate commercial messages into personal, informative or entertaining content, making promotional communication appear more relatable and organic (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). This ability to combine interpersonal influence with commercial communication has made influencer marketing increasingly attractive to businesses seeking more interactive approaches to reaching consumers.

Influencer marketing is particularly significant because contemporary consumers are exposed to large volumes of traditional and digital advertising and may increasingly rely on interpersonal recommendations and perceived authentic experiences when evaluating products and brands. Nielsen (2015) reported that consumers demonstrate considerable trust in recommendations from individuals compared with conventional advertising messages. Similarly, influencer-generated branded content has been found to attract consumer attention because influencers can communicate promotional information through content perceived as authentic, relevant and relatable (Pereira et al., 2014; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Cheung et al., 2022). Through product demonstrations, reviews, endorsements, images, videos and personal experiences, influencers can increase product awareness, facilitate information search and potentially shape consumer evaluations and purchasing decisions (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The growth of the global influencer marketing industry therefore reflects increasing recognition among businesses that social influence can complement traditional advertising and broader digital marketing strategies (Statista, 2021; Influencer Marketing Hub, 2024).

However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing cannot necessarily be attributed to the presence of an influencer alone. Previous studies suggest that consumer responses may depend on various characteristics associated with both the influencer and the promotional communication. Influencer credibility reflects the extent to which consumers perceive an influencer as knowledgeable, trustworthy, reliable and believable (Ohanian, 1990; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Influencer attractiveness may contribute to attention, identification and favourable perceptions of an endorsement, while content quality can influence whether promotional information is considered useful, informative and engaging (Erdogan, 1999; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Similarly, the frequency with which consumers encounter influencer-generated promotional content may increase familiarity and awareness, although repeated exposure does not necessarily guarantee favourable behavioural responses. These dimensions demonstrate that influencer marketing is a multidimensional phenomenon whose influence on consumer behaviour requires empirical examination rather than assumption.

The relationship between influencer characteristics and consumer behaviour has received increasing scholarly attention internationally. De Veirman et al. (2017) demonstrated that characteristics associated with social media influencers can shape consumer attitudes toward endorsed brands. Djafarova and Rushworth (2017) similarly established that authenticity, relatability and credibility contribute to the ability of online personalities to influence the purchase decisions of young consumers. Lou and Yuan (2019) found that message value and influencer credibility influence consumer trust in branded social media content and subsequent purchase intentions. Research also suggests that consumers may respond more positively where influencers and their endorsements correspond with their interests, identities and expectations (Kamins & Gupta, 1994; Choi & Rifon, 2012; Pradhan et al., 2016). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that influencer marketing can influence consumer responses, while also showing that its effectiveness may depend on several interconnected influencer- and message-related characteristics.

The relevance of influencer marketing is particularly pronounced among younger consumers. Young people constitute an important segment of social media users and are frequently exposed to influencer-generated content during their everyday digital interactions (DataReportal, 2023; ITU, 2022). Unlike audiences of traditional advertising who predominantly receive promotional communication passively, social media users can follow influencers, comment on posts, share content, participate in discussions and interact directly with both influencers and brands. Such interactions can contribute to closer perceived relationships between influencers and followers and potentially enhance the ability of influencers to shape product awareness, attitudes, preferences and purchasing decisions (Freberg et al., 2011; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). The commercial importance of younger consumers therefore makes understanding their responses to influencer marketing particularly relevant for businesses operating in increasingly digital markets.

Across Africa, growing internet penetration, expanding mobile network coverage and increased access to smartphones have accelerated the adoption of social media and digital commerce (African Development Bank, 2021; ITU, 2022). These developments have created new opportunities for businesses to communicate with consumers who may previously have been difficult or expensive to reach through traditional advertising channels. Social media influencers can potentially enhance these opportunities because their audiences may reflect particular demographic groups, interests, lifestyles and consumption communities. This enables businesses to engage in relatively targeted promotional communication while benefiting from the relationships influencers have established with followers (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Despite the growing commercial importance of influencer marketing, however, African markets remain comparatively underrepresented in international influencer marketing research, which has historically been dominated by evidence from Western and Asian contexts (Kumar & Jibril, 2025).

The Zambian context provides an important setting within which to investigate these developments. Increased internet connectivity, mobile technology adoption and social media participation have progressively expanded Zambia's digital environment (ZICTA, 2023; DataReportal, 2023). Social media platforms are increasingly used for communication, entertainment, information sharing, product discovery and commercial engagement. Available digital statistics further indicate that younger adults constitute a substantial proportion of Zambia's social media audience, reinforcing the relevance of digital platforms for businesses targeting the youth market (DataReportal, 2023). Facebook remains particularly prominent, while platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and WhatsApp also facilitate interaction between consumers, businesses and content creators (ZICTA, 2023; DataReportal, 2023). As social media adoption expands, Zambian businesses have increasing opportunities to incorporate influencers into their marketing strategies through sponsored posts, product demonstrations, reviews, endorsements and other forms of branded content.

Influencer marketing may be particularly valuable to businesses operating in environments where marketing resources are constrained because digital platforms potentially offer more targeted and interactive approaches to reaching consumers. Influencers can assist businesses in enhancing brand visibility, communicating product information and engaging consumers through different forms of content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Their ability to communicate with identifiable audience segments can also support more focused marketing activities, particularly where an influencer's followers correspond with a firm's intended target market. Moreover, digital analytics allow businesses to assess indicators such as audience reach, engagement and conversions, thereby providing opportunities to evaluate and refine influencer campaigns. Understanding whether and how influencer marketing translates into consumer buying behaviour is therefore increasingly important for businesses seeking to allocate marketing resources effectively.

Nevertheless, the growing use of influencer marketing also presents strategic and ethical concerns. The effectiveness of influencer endorsements may be weakened where consumers question the authenticity, honesty or motives underlying promotional recommendations. As influencer marketing becomes increasingly commercialised, distinguishing genuine recommendations from paid endorsements may become difficult. Concerns relating to transparency, disclosure of sponsored content and potentially misleading endorsements therefore raise questions about how consumers evaluate influencer-generated marketing messages. These concerns are particularly important because credibility and trust have repeatedly been identified as important elements of persuasive communication and consumer responses to influencer endorsements (Ohanian, 1990; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Businesses must therefore consider not only the audience size of influencers but also characteristics that may determine whether promotional messages translate into consumer action.

Within Zambia, empirical research specifically examining influencer marketing remains relatively limited. Existing studies have generally concentrated on broader social media marketing practices, organisational reputation and social media adoption by businesses rather than systematically examining influencer marketing and its relationship with consumer buying behaviour (Kakumbi & Phiri, 2022; Mpuku, 2024). For example, Kakumbi and Phiri

(2022) demonstrated increased reliance on social media among clothing SMEs in Lusaka, but their study did not specifically investigate how influencer-related characteristics affect youth purchasing behaviour. Similarly, although international evidence demonstrates relationships between influencer characteristics, consumer trust and purchasing intentions (De Veirman et al., 2017; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020), the applicability of such findings to Zambia cannot automatically be assumed because consumer behaviour occurs within distinct social, cultural and economic contexts.

This empirical gap is even more evident outside Zambia's largest commercial centres. Kabwe District, located in Central Province, represents an important secondary urban setting characterised by a sizeable youth population and increasing access to internet and mobile communication services (Zambia Statistics Agency [ZamStats], 2022; ZICTA, 2023). Young consumers in Kabwe are increasingly exposed to social media content and digital promotional communication, yet limited empirical evidence exists regarding whether influencer marketing shapes their buying behaviour and which influencer-related factors are most relevant. Existing international findings therefore provide an important foundation but offer limited context-specific evidence concerning young consumers in secondary urban centres such as Kabwe. This represents both a contextual gap, arising from limited evidence from Zambia and smaller urban settings, and an empirical gap concerning the relative contribution of different dimensions of influencer marketing to youth buying behaviour.

Accordingly, this study examines the relationship between social media influencer marketing and youth buying behaviour in Kabwe, Zambia. Rather than treating influencer marketing as a single undifferentiated construct, the study considers four dimensions identified in the literature: influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality and frequency of exposure (Ohanian, 1990; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Examining these dimensions simultaneously makes it possible to establish their individual and combined relationships with youth buying behaviour and generate empirical evidence concerning their relative relevance within the Kabwe context. In doing so, the study contributes context-specific evidence from an African secondary urban setting that remains comparatively underrepresented in influencer marketing scholarship (Kumar & Jibril, 2025). The findings are expected to contribute to literature on influencer marketing and consumer behaviour while providing practical insights for businesses and marketers seeking to engage Zambia's growing youth market through social media.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical literature reviewed, the study tests the following hypotheses:

H₁: Influencer credibility has a positive and significant relationship with youth buying behaviour.

H₂: Influencer attractiveness has a positive and significant relationship with youth buying behaviour.

H₃: Content quality has a positive and significant relationship with youth buying behaviour.

H₄: Frequency of exposure to influencer-generated promotional content has a positive and significant relationship with youth buying behaviour.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Source Credibility Theory (SCT)

This study uses Source Credibility Theory (SCT) as its primary theoretical lens for examining the relationship between social media influencer marketing and youth buying behaviour. Developed by Hovland and Weiss (1951), SCT explains how characteristics of a communication source can influence the acceptance and persuasiveness of a message. The theory proposes that consumers are more likely to respond favourably to information communicated by sources perceived as credible, particularly in terms of expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Ohanian (1990) subsequently extended its application to endorsement contexts by incorporating attractiveness alongside expertise and trustworthiness as characteristics capable of shaping consumer responses.

In this study, SCT provides particularly strong theoretical support for influencer credibility and influencer attractiveness. Credibility reflects perceptions of an influencer's knowledge, honesty, expertise and trustworthiness, while attractiveness concerns the influencer's perceived appeal to consumers (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). These source characteristics may shape how consumers evaluate recommendations and respond behaviourally (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020).

The study additionally examines content quality and frequency of exposure as complementary influencer-marketing characteristics informed by the broader marketing communication literature rather than as direct constructs of SCT. Content quality concerns the usefulness and appeal of influencer-generated messages, while exposure frequency reflects how often consumers encounter such content. SCT therefore provides a theoretical lens for understanding source-based persuasion without predetermining which factor influences buying behaviour. Accordingly, the study empirically examines the individual and combined relationships of credibility, attractiveness, content quality and exposure frequency with youth buying behaviour in Kabwe, Zambia.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical research increasingly demonstrates that social media influencer marketing can shape consumer attitudes, purchase intentions and buying behaviour, although the magnitude and determinants of this influence vary across contexts (De Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021; Ao et al., 2023). Influencer marketing differs from conventional advertising because influencers develop audiences through continuous content creation and interaction, enabling promotional messages to be embedded within content that followers may perceive as more personal, relatable and authentic (Evans et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019). Research has consequently examined several characteristics that may explain influencer effectiveness, including credibility, attractiveness, expertise, content usefulness, audience size and influencer-follower relationships (Freberg et al., 2011; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Vrontis et al., 2021). However, findings remain mixed concerning which characteristics exert the strongest influence on consumer purchasing outcomes (Ao et al., 2023; Xue & Musa, 2024).

Influencer credibility has emerged as one of the most extensively examined factors. Credibility generally reflects consumers' perceptions of the expertise, trustworthiness, honesty and reliability of the individual communicating a marketing message (Ohanian, 1990; Erdogan, 1999). Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), examining young female Instagram users in the United Kingdom, established that online personalities influenced purchase decisions because consumers perceived them as credible, authentic and relatable. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that influencer credibility positively affected

consumer trust in branded content and subsequent purchase intentions. This is consistent with evidence that consumers are more receptive to recommendations from influencers whom they perceive as competent and trustworthy (Silvera & Austad, 2004; Lee & Koo, 2015). Trustworthiness is particularly important because consumers may interpret honest and believable endorsements as reducing uncertainty associated with purchasing decisions (Ohanian, 1990; Hubert et al., 2018). Nevertheless, increasing commercialisation of influencer content can undermine credibility when audiences perceive endorsements as excessively promotional or inconsistent with an influencer's established identity (Vrontis et al., 2021).

Influencer attractiveness has also received substantial empirical attention. Attractiveness extends beyond physical appearance to include likability, personality, familiarity and other appealing characteristics capable of attracting consumer attention (Erdogan, 1999). Research indicates that attractive endorsers can generate favourable attitudes toward promoted products and brands and potentially strengthen purchase intentions (Till & Busler, 2000; Lee & Koo, 2015). De Veirman et al. (2017), in an experimental study conducted in Belgium, found that influencers with larger follower numbers were perceived as more popular and likeable, which influenced consumer attitudes toward endorsed brands, although the effect depended partly on the relationship between the influencer and the promoted product. Similarly, research suggests that source attractiveness can enhance advertising effectiveness by capturing attention and strengthening favourable evaluations of promotional messages (Eisend & Langner, 2010). However, attractiveness does not necessarily translate into purchasing behaviour independently of other characteristics such as expertise, trustworthiness and perceived authenticity, suggesting a need to examine its relative contribution alongside other influencer attributes.

Content-related characteristics represent another important dimension of influencer marketing effectiveness. Social media influencers are fundamentally content creators who establish and maintain audiences by regularly producing material considered informative, entertaining, inspirational or otherwise valuable (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Content quality or usefulness may influence consumers by providing information that assists product evaluation and purchasing decisions. Müller and Christandl (2019) demonstrated that social media content can influence consumer beliefs and purchase behaviour, while Lou and Yuan (2019) established that message value and content characteristics contribute to trust in influencer-generated branded content and purchase intentions. Influencer content delivered through videos, photographs, reviews, live streams and other interactive formats can integrate commercial messages into everyday narratives and thereby potentially increase consumer engagement (Evans et al., 2017). Consequently, content quality may complement influencer characteristics by determining whether audiences consider promotional messages useful, relevant and sufficiently persuasive to inform purchasing decisions.

Frequency of exposure represents a further dimension requiring empirical consideration. Social media platforms enable consumers to encounter promotional content repeatedly through influencer posts, recommendations and algorithmically curated feeds. Repeated exposure can increase product familiarity and awareness, potentially making promoted brands more cognitively accessible during consumer decision-making. However, greater exposure does not necessarily translate directly into purchase behaviour. Consumers may frequently encounter promotional content without developing sufficient trust, interest or need to purchase the advertised product. Global research therefore indicates that influencer marketing outcomes cannot be explained solely by visibility or reach and that the effectiveness of exposure may depend on the quality of the message and consumers' perceptions of the influencer (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021). This reinforces the importance of examining frequency of exposure alongside credibility, attractiveness and content quality rather than assuming that repeated visibility automatically generates purchasing responses.

Evidence from African markets generally supports the growing importance of influencer marketing but also demonstrates contextual variation. Increasing internet penetration, mobile connectivity and social media adoption have expanded opportunities for influencer-based marketing across the continent (Galal, 2024). Studies conducted in Egypt and South Africa indicate that influencer characteristics such as attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise can significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions, although the relative strength of these factors differs across markets and consumer groups (Ramela et al., 2022; El-Kady & Tarek, 2024). Mmolotsane (2022) similarly identified trust, likability, informative quality and perceived expertise as relevant to consumer responses to influencers. Furthermore, Makudza et al. (2020) found that peer-like or user-generated content can sometimes exert stronger behavioural influence than firm-generated communication, highlighting the importance of perceived authenticity and message source in African digital markets.

More specifically, Khwela et al. (2024) investigated social media influencers and the purchase patterns of skincare products among female university students in South Africa. Their findings demonstrated that influencer credibility and relatability significantly shaped consumers' purchasing decisions, providing evidence that interpersonal characteristics of influencers are particularly relevant among younger African consumers. Similarly, Salawudeen and Suleiman (2025) examined Generation Z consumers in Nigeria and reported that influencer marketing significantly shaped purchase decisions and was more influential than general social media and content marketing. These findings suggest that influencer marketing has considerable potential within African consumer markets. Nevertheless, variations across countries, product categories and consumer groups make it difficult to generalise findings uniformly across the continent (Vrontis et al., 2021; Ao et al., 2023).

Despite growing African evidence, empirical research on influencer marketing within Zambia remains comparatively limited. Existing studies have largely concentrated on social media adoption, digital marketing and organisational communication rather than specifically examining the mechanisms through which influencers shape consumer buying behaviour (Kakumbi & Phiri, 2022; Mpuku, 2024). Kakumbi and Phiri (2022), for example, examined social media adoption among clothing SMEs in Lusaka during the COVID-19 period and established that businesses increasingly relied on social media to promote products and interact with customers. While this demonstrates the growing commercial importance of social media, the study did not specifically determine how influencer characteristics affect youth buying behaviour. Similarly, Mpuku (2024) examined social media in relation to organisational reputation within Zambia's telecommunications sector rather than the direct relationship between influencer marketing and consumer purchasing behaviour.

Other emerging Zambian evidence presents similarly inconclusive findings concerning digital marketing and consumer responses. Studies have documented increased utilisation of online platforms by businesses and consumers, while some evidence suggests that exposure to online promotional communication does not necessarily translate into purchasing behaviour across all consumer groups (Katongo & Musawa, 2022; Kamangala & Kayombo, 2024). Qualitative evidence further indicates that businesses increasingly recognise social media as an important marketing platform, although influencer-specific mechanisms remain insufficiently examined (Imasiku, 2016). The continued expansion of internet connectivity and social media adoption in Zambia has nevertheless created conditions in which influencers are becoming increasingly relevant to business communication and consumer engagement (ZICTA, 2023). Consequently, there remains a need for empirical evidence capable of distinguishing the effects of specific influencer-marketing characteristics rather than examining social media marketing as a broad phenomenon.

A further limitation of the existing literature concerns geographical concentration. Much of the available Zambian research has focused on Lusaka and relatively large commercial markets (Kakumbi & Phiri, 2022; Mpuku, 2024). Comparatively little is known about influencer marketing and consumer behaviour in secondary urban centres such as Kabwe, despite increasing social media access and participation among young consumers. International findings concerning credibility, attractiveness and content usefulness cannot automatically be generalised to Kabwe because consumer responses to

influencers may differ according to social, economic, cultural and market conditions. Furthermore, the existing evidence provides limited understanding of whether frequent exposure to influencer-generated content independently contributes to actual buying behaviour within such contexts.

Overall, the empirical literature demonstrates that influencer marketing can shape consumer purchasing outcomes but provides no uniform conclusion regarding the relative importance of its different dimensions. Credibility and trustworthiness frequently emerge as important predictors (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Khwela et al., 2024), while attractiveness can contribute to favourable attitudes and purchase intentions (Erdogan, 1999; Lee & Koo, 2015; De Veirman et al., 2017). Content usefulness and quality can similarly strengthen consumer engagement and purchasing responses (Müller & Christandl, 2019; Lou & Yuan, 2019), whereas the independent contribution of repeated exposure remains less clearly established. Moreover, African evidence remains relatively limited, and Zambian studies have predominantly examined broader social media marketing rather than influencer-specific effects (Kakumbi & Phiri, 2022; Mpuku, 2024).

The present study therefore addresses an important empirical and contextual gap by simultaneously examining influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality and frequency of exposure in relation to youth buying behaviour in Kabwe, Zambia. Unlike studies that examine individual influencer attributes or general social media marketing, the study assesses both the individual and combined relationships of these four dimensions with youth buying behaviour. This approach provides an opportunity to determine empirically whether the dimensions contribute equally to purchasing behaviour or whether some possess greater explanatory relevance within the Kabwe youth market. In doing so, the study extends existing influencer marketing research to an underrepresented Zambian secondary urban context while generating evidence relevant to both consumer behaviour scholarship and contemporary marketing practice.

3 Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative approach using descriptive and explanatory research designs (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019). The descriptive design facilitated profiling respondents and summarising patterns in the study variables, while the explanatory design examined relationships between influencer credibility, attractiveness, content quality, frequency of exposure, and youth buying behaviour. The quantitative approach was appropriate for testing hypotheses and statistically determining the strength, direction, and combined contribution of the predictor variables to youth buying behaviour (Mufalali et al., 2026a).

Study Area

The study was conducted in Kabwe District, Central Province, approximately 140 kilometres north of Lusaka. Kabwe is a major urban centre characterised by a growing youth population and increasing access to internet and mobile communication services. The district provided an appropriate setting for the study because increasing social media usage among youths creates significant exposure to influencer-generated content, making it suitable for examining social media influencer marketing and youth buying behaviour.

Target Population and Sampling

The target population comprised youths aged 18–35 years residing in Kabwe District who actively used social media platforms, consistent with Zambia's definition of youth. A sample of 250 respondents was considered adequate for examining relationships among the study variables, consistent with comparable influencer marketing studies (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Hair et al., 2019). Respondents were selected using convenience sampling based on accessibility, willingness to participate and active social media use, an approach commonly applied in behavioural and marketing research involving respondents with specific characteristics (Saunders et al., 2019; Mufalali et al., 2026c).

Data Collection Methods and Instrument

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered online questionnaire developed in Google Forms and distributed to eligible youths in Kabwe District through social media platforms. The instrument comprised sections covering respondents' demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality, frequency of exposure, and youth buying behaviour. The study constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The structured questionnaire ensured standardised and comparable responses suitable for descriptive, correlation and multiple regression analyses (Saunders et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2019).

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, measurement items were developed and adapted from relevant theoretical and empirical literature on social media influencer marketing and consumer buying behaviour. Content validity was established through expert review to assess the relevance, clarity and alignment of the items with influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality, frequency of exposure and youth buying behaviour (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019). Construct validity was assessed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to establish whether the measurement items adequately represented their respective constructs (Hair et al., 2019; Mufalali et al., 2026b). Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 or above considered acceptable for internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019; Mundia et al., 2025; Mwiya et al., 2025). These procedures ensured that the instrument provided sufficiently valid and reliable measures for subsequent statistical analysis.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns and the study variables. Multiple linear regression assessed the individual and combined influence of influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality and frequency of exposure on youth buying behaviour. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ($p < .05$) (Hair et al., 2019; Mufalali et al., 2026a).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant university authorities prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before providing informed consent electronically through the online questionnaire. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and no personally identifying information was collected. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without consequence. All information collected was used strictly for academic and research purposes, consistent with established principles of responsible and ethical research practice (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2019; Mundia et al., 2023).

4 Findings and Discussion

This section presents the study findings. Literature and related studies assisted in the discussion of the findings. The section begins with the demographic profile of respondents and then presents and discusses the statistical findings relating to the relationships between influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality, frequency of exposure, and youth buying behaviour in Kabwe, Zambia.

4.1 Profile of Study Respondents

This section provided a detailed analysis of the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1: Profile of Study Respondents

Category	Item	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	148	59.2
	Female	102	40.8
	Total	250	100
Age	18–22 years	100	40
	23–27 years	115	46
	28–31 years	25	10
	32–35 years	10	4
	Total	250	100
Education Level	Secondary	4	1.6
	Diploma	70	28
	Degree	140	56
	Postgraduate	36	14.4
	Total	250	100
Occupation	Student	145	58
	Employed	45	18
	Self-employed	55	22
	Unemployed	5	2
	Total	250	100
Platforms Used	Facebook	246	98.4
	TikTok	167	66.8
	Instagram	128	51.2
	WhatsApp	198	79.2
	X (Twitter)	2	0.8
Usage Frequency	Several times a day	231	92.4
	Once a day	18	7.2
	A few times a week	1	0.4
	Rarely	0	0
	Total	250	100

Source: Field Data (2026)

Table 1 presents the demographic profile and social media usage characteristics of the respondents. The findings show that the majority were male (59.2%), while females accounted for 40.8%. Most respondents were aged 23–27 years (46.0%), followed by those aged 18–22 years (40.0%). Regarding education, the majority held degree qualifications (56.0%), while students constituted the largest occupational group (58.0%). Facebook was the most widely used platform (98.4%), followed by WhatsApp (79.2%), TikTok (66.8%) and Instagram (51.2%). Furthermore, 92.4% accessed social media several times daily, indicating high levels of digital engagement. Overall, the respondents were predominantly young, educated and frequent social media users, making them suitable for examining social media influencer marketing and youth buying behaviour.

4.2 Relationship Between Influencer Marketing Variables and Youth Buying Behaviour

Table 2 presents the multiple linear regression results used to determine the combined and independent influence of influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality, and frequency of exposure on youth buying behaviour in Kabwe. The analysis estimated the independent contribution of each predictor while controlling for the effects of the other variables in the model. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(4, 245) = 28.641$, $p < .001$, with $R = .564$ and $R^2 = .319$. This indicates that the four influencer marketing variables collectively explained 31.9% of the variance in youth buying behaviour, while the remaining 68.1% was attributable to other factors not included in the model.

Table 2: Regression Results for Social Media Influencer Marketing and Youth Buying Behaviour

Variable	B	β	t	p-value	Decision
Influencer Credibility (IC)	0.492	0.498	7.423	0.001	Supported
Influencer Attractiveness (IA)	0.004	0.007	0.094	0.925	Not Supported
Content Quality (CQ)	0.079	0.116	1.634	0.104	Not Supported
Frequency of Exposure (FE)	0.046	0.102	1.911	0.057	Not Supported

Source: Field Data (2026)

Influencer Credibility and Youth Buying Behaviour

The regression results revealed that influencer credibility had a positive and statistically significant influence on youth buying behaviour ($B = 0.492$, $\beta = .498$, $t = 7.423$, $p < .001$). The standardized coefficient indicates that credibility made the strongest independent contribution to youth buying behaviour among the four influencer marketing dimensions examined. Therefore, H1 was supported. This suggests that youths in Kabwe are more likely to respond favourably to influencer recommendations when they perceive the influencer as knowledgeable, trustworthy, honest and reliable.

The finding strongly aligns with Source Credibility Theory, which proposes that persuasive communication is more effective when the source is perceived as credible, particularly in terms of expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Pornpitakpan, 2004). It also supports Ohanian's (1990) argument that source credibility shapes consumer responses to endorsements. Empirically, the finding corroborates Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), who established that authenticity, relatability and credibility influenced purchase decisions among young consumers. Similarly, Lou and Yuan (2019) found that influencer credibility enhanced trust in branded content and purchase intentions, while Khwela et al. (2024) reported that credibility significantly shaped purchasing decisions among young South African consumers. The result further supports Silvera and Austad (2004) and Lee and Koo (2015), who emphasised the importance of competence and trustworthiness in endorsement effectiveness. Thus, within the Kabwe context, credibility appears more influential than merely being exposed to attractive or engaging influencer content.

Influencer Attractiveness and Youth Buying Behaviour

The regression analysis showed that influencer attractiveness had a positive but statistically insignificant influence on youth buying behaviour ($B = 0.004$, $\beta = .007$, $t = 0.094$, $p = .925$). The very small standardized coefficient indicates that attractiveness contributed negligibly to explaining youth buying behaviour after controlling for credibility, content quality and frequency of exposure. Consequently, H2 was not supported. This suggests that although youths may find influencers physically attractive, likeable, familiar or appealing, such attributes alone do not necessarily translate into purchasing behaviour.

This finding provides an important qualification to Source Credibility Theory, particularly Ohanian's (1990) extension incorporating attractiveness as a characteristic capable of influencing endorsement effectiveness. Previous research has suggested that attractive endorsers can capture consumer attention, generate favourable brand attitudes and strengthen purchase intentions (Erdogan, 1999; Till & Busler, 2000; Lee & Koo, 2015). De Veirman et al. (2017) similarly found that influencers perceived as popular and likeable could positively influence attitudes toward endorsed brands. However, the present findings indicate that attractiveness does not independently predict buying behaviour among youths in Kabwe when other influencer characteristics are considered simultaneously. This supports the broader observation that influencer attributes may operate differently across markets and consumer groups (Vrontis et al., 2021; Ao et al., 2023). The result implies that attractiveness may capture attention or generate favourable impressions without necessarily producing behavioural responses. For marketers, selecting influencers primarily on physical appeal, popularity or likability may therefore be insufficient unless these characteristics are accompanied by qualities that strengthen the persuasiveness of the endorsement.

Content Quality and Youth Buying Behaviour

The findings indicated that content quality had a positive but statistically insignificant influence on youth buying behaviour ($B = 0.079$, $\beta = .116$, $t = 1.634$, $p = .104$). Although the positive coefficient suggests that improvements in the perceived quality of influencer-generated content were associated with increased buying behaviour, the relationship did not reach statistical significance at the 5% level. Therefore, H3 was not supported. The finding suggests that informative, entertaining, relevant and engaging influencer content may attract youths but does not independently provide sufficient motivation to translate engagement into purchasing behaviour.

This result differs somewhat from previous empirical evidence. Lou and Yuan (2019) established that message value and content characteristics contributed to consumer trust and purchase intentions, while Müller and Christandl (2019) demonstrated that social media content could influence consumer beliefs and purchasing behaviour. Evans et al. (2017) further observed that influencer content can embed commercial messages within relatable narratives, potentially enhancing audience engagement. Nevertheless, the present result demonstrates an important distinction between content engagement and actual buying behaviour. High-quality content may generate attention, information and entertainment without necessarily resulting in purchases when considered alongside other influencer characteristics. This finding is consistent with the broader evidence that influencer marketing effects vary across contexts and consumer groups (Vrontis et al., 2021; Ao et al., 2023). Within Kabwe, therefore, content quality appears to play a complementary rather than independently decisive role. Marketers should consequently ensure that creative and informative content is supported by influencer characteristics capable of strengthening consumers' confidence in promotional recommendations.

Frequency of Exposure and Youth Buying Behaviour

The regression results revealed that frequency of exposure had a positive but statistically insignificant influence on youth buying behaviour ($B = 0.046$, $\beta = .102$, $t = 1.911$, $p = .057$). Although the relationship approached statistical significance, the p-value remained above the conventional 5% threshold; therefore, H4 was not supported. The positive coefficient nevertheless suggests that repeated exposure to influencer-generated promotional content may have some association with buying behaviour, although its independent contribution was insufficient to establish a statistically significant effect when credibility, attractiveness and content quality were controlled.

The finding supports literature cautioning against assuming that increased visibility automatically translates into consumer purchases. Repeated exposure can increase awareness, familiarity and cognitive accessibility of promoted brands, but consumers may still require sufficient trust, product relevance or purchasing need before acting on influencer recommendations (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Vrontis et al., 2021). The finding is also consistent with emerging Zambian evidence indicating that exposure to online promotional communication does not necessarily translate into purchasing behaviour across all consumer groups (Katongo & Musawa, 2022; Kamangala & Kayombo, 2024). Importantly, the result should not be interpreted as evidence that exposure has no relevance, given its positive coefficient and near-significant p-value. Rather, repeated exposure alone appears insufficient to independently drive youth purchasing behaviour. This suggests that marketers should prioritise the quality and persuasiveness of influencer engagement rather than merely increasing the frequency with which promotional messages appear in consumers' social media feeds.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between social media influencer marketing and youth buying behaviour in Kabwe, Zambia, focusing on influencer credibility, influencer attractiveness, content quality and frequency of exposure. The findings demonstrate that the four dimensions collectively provide a meaningful explanation of youth buying behaviour, accounting for 31.9% of its variation. However, their individual contributions differed considerably. Influencer credibility emerged as the only statistically significant predictor, demonstrating that youths are more responsive to recommendations from influencers whom they perceive as knowledgeable, trustworthy, honest and reliable. This finding provides empirical support for Source Credibility Theory within the context of influencer marketing among youths in Kabwe.

Conversely, influencer attractiveness, content quality and frequency of exposure did not independently exert statistically significant influences on youth buying behaviour. These findings suggest that being attractive, producing engaging content or repeatedly exposing consumers to promotional messages may generate attention and awareness but may not independently translate into purchasing behaviour. Overall, the study concludes that the effectiveness of influencer marketing among youths in Kabwe depends more strongly on the perceived credibility of the influencer than on appearance, content quality or repeated exposure. The findings contribute context-specific evidence to influencer marketing literature by demonstrating that the relative importance of influencer characteristics may vary across consumer and geographical contexts.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, businesses and marketers targeting youths in Kabwe should prioritise influencer credibility when selecting individuals for social media marketing campaigns. Rather than concentrating primarily on follower numbers, physical attractiveness or online popularity, businesses should engage influencers perceived as trustworthy, knowledgeable, honest and competent in relation to the products or services they endorse. Influencer selection should therefore incorporate credibility assessments, including the influencer's expertise, reputation, previous endorsements, audience relationships and consistency between personal identity and promoted brands.

Although influencer attractiveness and content quality were not statistically significant independent predictors, they should not be disregarded. Businesses should use attractiveness and creative content as complementary attributes for attracting attention and sustaining audience engagement while ensuring that promotional messages are delivered through credible influencers. Content should remain informative, relevant, authentic and appropriately aligned with the interests of the targeted youth audience.

Similarly, businesses should avoid relying excessively on repeated exposure as a strategy for generating purchases. Since frequency of exposure approached but did not achieve statistical significance, marketers should emphasise the relevance and persuasiveness of promotional encounters rather than merely increasing posting frequency.

Finally, because the model explained 31.9% of the variation in youth buying behaviour, future studies should investigate additional determinants such as price, peer influence, brand loyalty, product involvement, influencer-follower congruence and perceived authenticity. Future research could also extend the study to other Zambian districts, employ probability sampling and compare different product categories and social media platforms to enhance the generalisability of the findings.

Declaration of Competing Interests

The Authors declare no competing interests.

Funding

No specific funding for this study came from governmental, private, or nonprofit organisations.

Authors' Contribution Statement

Formulated and designed the study; established the research framework and technique; directed the composition of the initial manuscript draft.

Ethical considerations

The article followed all ethical standards appropriate for this kind of research.

References

- African Development Bank. (2021). African economic outlook 2021: From debt resolution to growth: The road ahead for Africa. African Development Bank Group.
- Ao, L., Bansal, R., Pruthi, N., & Khaskheli, M. B. (2023). Impact of social media influencers on customer engagement and purchase intention: A meta-analysis. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 2744. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032744>
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48, 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- Berry, S. (2024). Distrust of social media influencers in America. arXiv preprint arXiv:2406.02492.
- Chaffey, D. (2022). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Cheung, M. L., Leung, W. K. S., Yang, M. X., Koay, K. Y., & Chang, M. K. (2022). Exploring the nexus of social media influencers and consumer brand engagement. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 34(10), 2370–2385.
- Choi, S. M., & Rifon, N. J. (2012). It is a match: The impact of congruence between celebrity image and consumer ideal self on endorsement effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(9), 639–650. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20550>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

- DataReportal. (2023). Digital 2023: Global overview report. We Are Social & Meltwater.
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 68, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009>
- Eisend, M., & Langner, T. (2010). Immediate and delayed advertising effects of celebrity endorsers' attractiveness and expertise. *International Journal of Advertising*, 29(4), 527–546.
- El-Kady, S. M., & Tarek, Y. (2024). The impact of social media influencers' characteristics on customers' purchase intention in the Egyptian market. *Commercial and Financial Studies Journal*, 5(2), 215–242. <https://doi.org/10.21608/cfdj.2024.254684.1867>
- Erdogan, B. Z. (1999). Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(4), 291–314. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725799784870379>
- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Evans, J. R., & Mathur, A. (2018). The value of online surveys: A look back and a look ahead. *Internet Research*, 28(4), 854–887. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-03-2018-0089>
- Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 17(2), 138–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885>
- Field, A. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001>
- Galal, S. (2024). Internet and social media users in the world 2024. Statista.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). *Multivariate data analysis* (8th ed.). Cengage.
- Hovland, C. I., & Weiss, W. (1951). The influence of source credibility on communication effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 15(4), 635–650. <https://doi.org/10.1086/266350>
- Hubert, M., Hubert, M., Linzmayer, M., Riedl, R., & Kenning, P. (2018). Trust me if you can -Neurophysiological insights on the influence of consumer impulsiveness on trustworthiness evaluations in online settings. *European Journal of Marketing*, 52(1/2), 118–146.
- Imasiku, M. S. (2016). Social media marketing: A juxtaposition of various effects on businesses in Zambia. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business, Economics, Social Science & Humanities*, 21–27. <https://doi.org/10.15242/DIRPUB.DIRH1016209>
- Influencer Marketing Hub. (2024). The state of influencer marketing 2024: Benchmark report.
- International Telecommunication Union. (2022). *Measuring digital development: Facts and figures 2022*. ITU Publications.
- Kakumbi, G., & Phiri, J. (2022). Adoption of social media for SME growth in the COVID-19 era: A case of SMEs in the clothing industry in Lusaka, Zambia. *Open Journal of Business and Management*, 10(6), 3202–3229. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojbm.2022.106159>
- Kamangala, E. C., & Kayombo, K. M. (2024). Investigating the role of online marketing on ZCAS University students' buying behaviour.
- Kamins, M. A., & Gupta, K. (1994). Congruence between spokesperson and product type: A matchup hypothesis perspective. *Psychology & Marketing*, 11(6), 569–586. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220110605>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Katongo, B., & Musawa, N. (2022). The impact of digital marketing on consumer involvement in Zambia during the COVID-19 epidemic. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 10(7), 3660–3670. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijstrm/v10i7.em01>
- Khanom, M. T. (2023). Using social media marketing in the digital era: A necessity or a choice. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science*, 12(3), 88–98. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i3.2507>
- Khwela, N. P., Msosa, S. K., & Ntshangase, B. A. (2024). Social media influencers and their role in the purchase pattern of products among females: Gender aspects of business leadership in the skincare industry. *Business Ethics and Leadership*, 8(4), 173–185.
- Kirtis, A. K., & Karahan, F. (2011). To be or not to be in social media arena as the most cost-efficient marketing strategy after the global recession. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 260–268. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.09.083>
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for humanity*. Wiley.
- Kumar, A., & Jibril, A. B. (2025). Exploring the landscape of influencer marketing research: A systematic review and bibliometric analysis. *SAGE Open*, 15(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251364040>
- Lee, Y., & Koo, J. (2015). Athlete endorsement, attitudes, and purchase intention: The interaction effect between athlete endorser-product congruence and endorser credibility. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(5), 523–538. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2014.0195>
- Likert, R. (1932). A technique for the measurement of attitudes. *Archives of Psychology*, 22(140), 1–55.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- Makudza, F., Mugarisanwa, C., & Siziba, S. (2020). The effect of social media on consumer purchase behaviour in the mobile telephony industry in Zimbabwe. *Dutch Journal of Finance and Management*, 4(2), em0065. <https://doi.org/10.29333/djfm/9299>
- Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts. (2015). *National youth policy*. Government of the Republic of Zambia.

- Mmolotsane, J. M. (2022). The impact of social media influencers on purchase intention. *Effulgence: A Management Journal*, 20(1), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.33601/effulgence.rdiav20/i1/2022/27-37>
- Mpuku, V. (2024). A study on the effectiveness of using social media for organizational reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zambia: A case of Zamtel. *African Journal of Commercial Studies*, 4(3), 194–199. <https://doi.org/10.59413/ajocs/v4.i3.3>
- Mufalali, S. M., Moose, J., Bbenkele, E., Sikachelela, J., Mundia, M., & Muduli, R. (2026a). Revisiting entrepreneurial orientation: A dimensional performance architecture in emerging market SMEs—Evidence from Kabwe District, Zambia. *African Journal of Empirical Research*, 7(2), 183–191.
- Mufalali, S. M., Muduli, R., Mundia, M., Ngoma, K., & Sikachelela, J. (2026b). From exposure to intention: How social media entrepreneurial content shapes youth entrepreneurial intentions in Kabwe District, Zambia. *African Journal of Commercial Studies*, 7(3), 356–364.
- Mufalali, S. M., Muduli, R., Mundia, M., Ngoma, K., Mwiya, B., & Sikachelela, J. (2026c). Youth consumer preferences for local vs. international brands: Implications for SMEs in Kabwe District, Zambia. *African Journal of Commercial Studies*, 7(3), 523–532.
- Müller, J., & Christandl, F. (2019). Content is king - but who is the king of kings? The effect of content marketing, sponsored content and user-generated content on brand responses. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 96, 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.02.006>
- Mundia, M., Nkonde, C., Simui, F., Mufalali, M. S., & Muduli, R. (2023). Cooperatives and livelihood improvement: Understanding the contribution of enterprising agriculture cooperatives in rural communities of Kabwe District, Zambia. *European Journal of Agriculture and Food Sciences*, 5(2), 40–46.
- Mundia, M., Simasiku, M. M., & Chakwana, P. (2025). The role of micro-finance institutions on financial inclusion of farmpreneurs in rural communities of Kabwe District, Zambia. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(10), 3400–3411.
- Mundia, M., Simasiku, M. M., Joseph, I., Muduli, R., & Mweemba, K. (2026). Indigenous knowledge and entrepreneurial mindset among the Ila-speaking people of Namwala District, Zambia. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(1), 3313–3322.
- Mwiya, M. S., Moose, J., Bbenkele, E., Regina, M., Mundia, M., & Sikachelela, J. (2025). Entrepreneurial mindset in practice: Manifestations of entrepreneurial orientation among trading SMEs in Kabwe District, Zambia. *East African Journal of Management and Business Studies*, 5(4), 26–37.
- Nielsen. (2015). Global trust in advertising: Winning strategies for an evolving media landscape. Nielsen.
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>
- Opreana, A., & Vinerean, S. (2015). A new development in online marketing: Introducing digital inbound marketing. *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 3(1), 29–34.
- Pereira, H. G., de Fátima Salgueiro, M., & Mateus, I. (2014). Say yes to Facebook and get your customers involved! Relationships in a world of social networks. *Business Horizons*, 57(6), 695–702. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.07.001>
- Pornpitakpan, C. (2004). The persuasiveness of source credibility: A critical review of five decades' evidence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34(2), 243–281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02547.x>
- Pradhan, D., Duraipandian, I., & Sethi, D. (2016). Celebrity endorsement: How celebrity-brand-user personality congruence affects brand attitude and purchase intention. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 22(5), 456–473. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2014.914561>
- Ramela, O., de Villiers, M., & Chuchu, T. (2022). Assessing the effectiveness of influencer marketing communication of beauty products on social media in South Africa: A consumer's perspective. *Communitas*, 27, 74–84. <https://doi.org/10.18820/24150525/Comm.v27.6>
- Salawudeen, A., & Suleiman, U. G. (2025). Digital marketing strategies and Generation-Z consumer buying behaviour in Nigeria. *African Journal of Business and Economic Research*. Advance online publication.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Silvera, D. H., & Austad, B. (2004). Factors predicting the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement advertisements. *European Journal of Marketing*, 38(11/12), 1509–1526. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560410560218>
- Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101742. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>
- Statista. (2021). Influencer marketing market size worldwide. Statista Research Department.
- Statista. (2023). Number of social media users worldwide from 2017 to 2027. Statista Research Department.
- Till, B. D., & Busler, M. (2000). The match-up hypothesis: Physical attractiveness, expertise, and the role of fit on brand attitude, purchase intent and brand beliefs. *Journal of Advertising*, 29(3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2000.10673613>
- Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 45(4), 617–644. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12647>
- Xue, G., & Musa, R. B. (2024). Research on the effect of social media marketing credibility on consumer attitudes. *Journal of International Business and Management*, 7(8), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.37227/JIBM-2024-07-6582>
- Yang, Y. (2024). The impact of social media on consumer purchasing decisions. *Transactions on Economics, Business and Management Research*, 8, 179–187.
- Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority. (2023). Information and communication technologies sector 2023 mid-year market report (Vol. VIII, Issue I). ZICTA.
- Zambia Statistics Agency. (2022). 2022 census of population and housing: Preliminary report. Zambia Statistics Agency.