

# **THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN MARKETING BEAUTY AND SKIN-CARE PRODUCTS IN UGANDA**

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**DECLARATION**

The work I submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the Thesis, which is not my own work, has been identified and acknowledged. No material is included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed ...  .....

Date ...15/05/2026.....

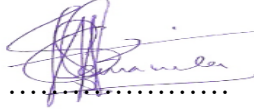
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## **APPROVAL**

This work has been produced and under the supervision of;

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Dissertation Date:15/05/2026

## **DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this research project. First and foremost, I thank Almighty God for the strength, wisdom, and good health throughout my studies.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor and lecturers for their valuable guidance, constructive criticism and continuous support during this research process. Their academic advice and encouragement greatly contributed to the success of this study.

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Finally, I appreciate everyone whose contribution, directly or indirectly, made this research possible.

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the role of social media influencers in marketing beauty and skin-care products in Uganda. It explores how influencers on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and X affect consumer awareness, brand perception and purchasing decisions, especially among young people. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the study finds that influencers play a major role in promoting beauty and skin-care products due to their credibility, relatability and strong engagement with followers. However, challenges such as misleading information and unrealistic beauty standards were also identified. The study concludes that influencer marketing is an effective tool for beauty brands in Uganda, but there is a need for transparency, ethical practices and honest product promotion to protect consumers.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.0 Introduction

Social media has transformed marketing at its core by enabling direct brand-to-consumer engagements. Using influencer marketing, especially within the beauty and skincare sector, is one of the main ways to advertise products, boost brand recognition and influence consumer buying decisions. Influencers, usually popular people with a lot of followers on their social media platforms, are not only opinion leaders but also act as credible sources since their posts combine authenticity with marketing objectives (De Veirman, Cauberghe & Hudders, 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Due to a young population and long-term use of social media, influencer marketing has become a significant approach for the beauty and skincare industry in Uganda. The paper investigates how influencers generate, distribute and communicate content that affects purchasing decisions and fosters trust among consumers. The marketing sector in Uganda has experienced a significant digital overhaul over the past 20 years. Other broadcast media, like radio and print, were the leading advertising platforms before the rise of the internet.

With more than 29 million internet users in Uganda in 2023, the digital economy of the country depends mainly on social media as the main communication and marketing medium (Uganda Communications Commission [UCC], 2023; DataReportal, 2023). Instagram, YouTube and TikTok are now being prioritized for marketing beauty and skincare products.

Influencers in this niche use Instagram for posting attractive pictures, YouTube for demonstration videos, and TikTok for eye-catching short videos aimed at product promotion and audience interaction (Kalemera, 2021). Over the last ten years, the beauty industry in Uganda has experienced rapid development.

Through the use of social media influencers, local brands and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are able to reach large audiences at a lower price compared to the cost of traditional advertising (Osunsan, Muhumuza & Birungi, 2023).

Most influencers that people follow are micro-influencers who are perceived as genuine and relatable. However, macro and mega influencers mostly work with multinational cosmetics companies (Sseguya, 2021). This growth points to the pivotal role that influencer marketing plays in consumer decision-making in Uganda's beauty market.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

With the increasing penetration of influencer marketing in the beauty and skincare sectors of Uganda, not much research has been done to determine how influencers impact consumer perceptions, trust and decision-making when it comes to purchases. Most of the research that exists focuses on general social media usage or political communication (Nduhura & Prieler, 2017) rather than product-oriented marketing. Therefore, the methods that influencers use to foster brand trust and the quantifiable outcomes of their promotional efforts are still largely unknown.

On the other hand, influencers and brands face challenges like limited resources, confusion about regulations and the struggle to keep the essence of their brand while engaging in commercial activities. This paper attempts to fill these holes by looking into how influencers do their work and what obstacles they face that hinder their marketing efforts in the Ugandan beauty and skincare industry.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of social media influencers in marketing beauty and skincare products in Uganda, focusing on the strategies they use and the challenges they encounter in promoting these products on digital platforms.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To analyze the strategies employed by social media influencers in promoting beauty and skincare products in Uganda.
2. To investigate the challenges faced by influencers and beauty brands in implementing effective influencer marketing campaigns in Uganda.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What strategies do social media influencers use to market beauty and skin-care products in Uganda?
2. What challenges do influencers and beauty brands face in implementing influencer marketing campaigns for beauty and skin-care products in Uganda?

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the role of social media influencers in promoting beauty and skin-care products in Uganda between 2019 and 2025. It concentrates on urban areas such as Kampala, Wakiso and Entebbe, where influencer marketing activities are most prevalent. The study examines three platforms, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok since they dominate the influencer marketing space for beauty and skin-care brands. The research focuses on influencer strategies, audience engagement and challenges encountered in executing effective influencer marketing campaigns.

### **1.6 Justification of the Study**

This study is justified by several factors. Academically, it fills a gap in Ugandan scholarship on influencer marketing within the beauty and skin-care industry, a sector that remains under-researched (Omanga, Adebayo, & Nduhura, 2023). For small business owners and makeup companies in Uganda, real-world results matter most when choosing how to reach customers online. Because cash for TV or radio ads is tight, many now turn to social media personalities who offer clear returns without high costs (Osunsan et al., 2023). Young people dominate the country's population; more than three out of four are younger than thirty, which shapes where beauty messages land best (Uganda Bureau of

Statistics [UBOS], 2022). So, what this research uncovers can quietly guide partnerships between creators and labels, balancing appeal with honesty and care.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

The three processes, compliance, identification and internalization, are central to how people change their views and actions based on others around them. Developed by Kelman (1958), the Social Influence Theory shows how simple peer pressure can grow into lasting belief shifts.

When someone follows rules to avoid punishment or get a reward, that's compliance. If they see someone they respect and copy their habits or views, that's identification. And when those behaviours finally match what the person genuinely believes, it's internalization.

The shift from surface-level following to deep alignment feels more powerful than most people admit. For followers in Uganda's beauty and skin-care scene, influencers are trusted voices with real-life appeal. Their authenticity gives followers a reason to believe what they say, not just because of social proof but because of shared values. A beauty influencer recommending a skincare routine taps into both admiration and perceived knowledge.

People tend to follow such advice without even realizing it. Trust isn't built overnight; it builds slowly through repeated exposure and emotional connection. The way influencers show up matters more than any single post ever does. So much so that some users start using products simply because they feel like the influencer would too.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter opens with an exploration of social media influencers pushing beauty and skincare items across Uganda. Background details appear alongside the objectives, problem statement and justification behind the investigation, laying out key theories as

well. Weaving together Social Influence Theory, Chaffey's model for online marketing and the Uses and Gratifications approach. Through this blend, a framework is formed, one that helps examine how influencer actions shift brand messaging habits and buyer choices. The setting? Uganda's changing digital marketplace, where attention moves fast and opinions spread wider.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews academic work about how social media influencers affect marketing for beauty and skincare items, focusing on two major research questions.

1. What strategies do social media influencers use to market beauty and skin-care products in Uganda?
2. What challenges do influencers and beauty brands face in implementing influencer marketing campaigns in Uganda?

Looking at research from 2019 to 2025, drawn from African settings and wider worldwide cases, this analysis leans on ideas like Social Influence Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory and Chaffey's model.

#### 2.1 Strategies Used by Social Media Influencers in Marketing Beauty and Skin-Care Products

##### 2.1.1 Authenticity and Relatability

This area has been the focus of many studies as they uncover authenticity as the key to influencers' success. Adebayo, Akpan and Ayodele (2025) discovered that content that is relatable and shares personal experience with the use of the product increases trust and engagement. Motara (2022) found that influencers who depict themselves as "real users" of the product rather than "brand ambassadors" induce a higher purchase desire among South African beauty consumers. Ugandan micro-influencers, who mostly use local dialects and humour, are following the same personalization methods (Kalemera, 2021). Gebashe, Naidoo and Amoo (2022) unveiled the idea of "cosmeceutical storytelling" in which influencers give scientific information about the skincare products and at the same time, reveal their authentic lifestyles, thus making consumers more familiar with the products and more loyal to them.

### **2.1.2 Platform Diversification and Visual Storytelling**

The efficiency of influencer marketing is very much dependent on multi-platform engagement. Jibril and Kumar (2025) discovered that integration of cross-platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok strengthens brand messaging and aids in audience remembrance. In Uganda, influencers alter their content according to platform algorithms and user demographics. They focus more on visuals and tutorials on Instagram and TikTok (Osunsan, Muhumza & Birungi, 2023). Visual storytelling is in line with Chaffey's (2020) digital marketing model, advocating uniform aesthetics and brand message across different media platforms.

### **2.1.3 Credibility and Value Alignment**

Yusuf and Muktar (2025) demonstrated that perceived credibility (trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise) plays an important role in consumer decision-making. For Ugandan beauty influencers, not only is it necessary to match their personal values with those of the brand, but it is also a matter of survival since audience reactions to "sellout" behaviour without proper communication are often very harsh (Sseguya, 2021). De Veirman, Cauberghe and Hudders (2017) noticed that though follower count can increase the reach of the content, it may also jeopardize the authenticity of the influencer if he/she becomes too commercialized, a warning that was reiterated by Motara (2022), and Abate, Ukpabi and Karjaluo (2025).

## **2.2 Challenges Faced by Influencers and Beauty Brands in Implementing Campaigns**

### **2.2.1 Limited Resources and Financial Constraints**

Mbego (2025) points out that a lack of funding results in poor production quality and less frequent content, particularly for new influencers in Africa. Ugandan SMEs, on the other hand mostly resort to small budget marketing, sometimes paying influencers by giving them products instead of money (Osunsan et al. 2023)

### **2.2.2 Regulation and Ethical Ambiguity**

This adversely affects the regularity of content in addition to lowering the level of excitement of influencers. Smith (2025) elaborates on the absence of well-defined taxation and advertising rules for influencers in Africa that pave the way for legal indefiniteness and non-uniformity when it comes to brand disclosure. Bett (2025) cautions that secret sponsorships result in a loss of confidence by the public, which can potentially lead to a decline in influencers' credibility in the long run.

### **2.2.3 Audience Saturation and Declining Engagement**

In fact, there is no unified code for influencer advertising in Uganda, which makes the whole environment unregulated. Akin-Odukoya and Okunade (2025) showed that the pains of promoting too many products have made audiences tired. They argued that as the influencers become the mouthpieces of different and unrelated products, their followers will look for any sign to doubt their authenticity.

Kalemera (2021) thinks that the same is happening to the Ugandan TikTok stars who see a gradual decline in their interaction levels when they make the promotion of the paid ads their principal content.

### **2.2.4 Platform Algorithm Challenges**

Adebayo et al. (2025) show that the social media algorithms that are commonly used today give higher priority to paid content, which means that the organic reach is being limited all the time. Since this happens more to small-scale Ugandan influencers with a low advertising budget, they find themselves having to rely on gifts to fans or going viral as their only way to keep their presence.

### **2.2.5 Cultural Representation and Identity**

Gebashe et al. (2022) and Tapera, Mashapure and Mutanda (2025), through a joint discussion, point out that the African beauty business is facing a dilemma as it tries to reconcile the very strong global beauty standards with the local authenticity of African people.

This is very much in line with the tension that Ugandan influencers experience when they are caught between promoting foreign beauty products and, at the same time, representing the indigenous cultures and the darker skin tones.

### **2.3 Theoretical Integration**

Social Influence Theory uncovers the source of influencers' power to direct consumers' decisions, which is through positioning themselves as an authority and obtaining approval from their peers. On the other hand, UGT helps describe the viewers' reasons for watching such programs, their acquisition of knowledge, their ways of self-expression and their sense of being part of a community.

Meanwhile, Chaffey (2020) Digital Marketing Framework recognizes influencers as essential elements of the integrated marketing communications model. Altogether, these concepts provide a background to the functional as well as the emotional influences of the marketing of influencers in Uganda.

### **2.4 Summary**

In conclusion, top influencer marketing techniques in Uganda focus on being genuine, trustworthy and connecting well with the audience. On the other hand, issues like small budgets, unclear ethics and changing algorithms limit the impact of the campaigns. The qualitative research methods described in the following chapter are based on these considerations.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes in full detail the methodological framework used for this research. It aims to analyze the role of social media influencers in the marketing of beauty and skincare products in Uganda. More precisely, this research looks into the methods used by influencers to advertise these products as well as the problems that both influencers and beauty brands face when trying to launch successful campaigns. Qualitative research methods were used in carrying out this study to allow for a detailed examination of the participants' experiences, thoughts, desires and behaviors in this ever-changing online environment (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This type of research is very suitable for illustrating the subtle and localized features of influencer marketing in an African digital economy that is still developing, because numerical indicators by themselves are very likely to miss the social and cultural aspects that lie beneath (Molefe & Ralephata, 2024). The data were gathered from September 2025 to December 2025 and the transcription and basic analysis were done in early 2026 to make sure that the findings portray the latest developments in the beauty industry of Uganda, which is changing very fast.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study utilized this study, the researchers adopted an exploratory qualitative method, which is most effective for studying new phenomena in the least studied areas, e.g. influencer marketing in the beauty and skincare industry of Uganda (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With the help of this technique, it is possible to develop a qualitative understanding and interpretation of how content creators who are influencers develop their content, gain the trust of their audience and at the same time attract commercial businesses.

This therefore allows the design to be consistent with the research goals, which are to find out strategies and problems from different points of view of the main actors (Saunders et

al. 2019). Since it was exploratory, there was room for further investigations into unforeseen topics such as the relationship between global beauty standards and local cultural authenticity, which are very much at the core of the Ugandan situation (Gebashe et al. 2022).

### **3.2 Study Area**

The study was geographically limited to urban centers of Uganda, notably Kampala, Wakiso and Entebbe. These settlements were chosen as they are the main centers of digital connectivity, social media use and influencer marketing activities in the country (Uganda Communications Commission, 2023; DataReportal, 2025). Most of the beauty brands and digital marketing agencies that have a significant market share in the metropolitan area of Greater Kampala have their outlets located in Kampala, while Wakiso and Entebbe provide a major percentage of the internet penetration and consumer market in the metropolitan area (Statista, 2025a). Given that more than 70% of Uganda's social media users are in urban areas and most beauty influencer campaigns start from these places (NapoleonCat, 2025).

### **3.3 Target Population**

The target population consisted of three connected stakeholder groups whose insights were vital to the comprehension of the beauty and skincare influencer marketing ecosystem.

1. Social media influencers: People who regularly create and post content about beauty and skincare items on the major platforms (Instagram, TikTok and YouTube), have significant followers and have experience with sponsored collaborations (Modash, 2025).
2. Beauty Brand Representatives: Marketing managers, brand owners, or digital coordinators working for local small and medium beauty enterprises (for example, Movit Cosmetics, Amagara Skincare) and distributors of international brands (for example, Nivea, The Ordinary) who are responsible for initiating and managing influencer partnerships (6Wresearch, 2025-2031).

3. Digital Marketing Experts: Specialists from advertising agencies or independent consultants in Kampala who are involved in the creation, implementation and assessment of influencer marketing campaigns for beauty clients (Osunsan et al. 2023).

These groups were targeted because of their direct engagement with the phenomenon being studied, offering different viewpoints on strategies and issues.

### **3.4 Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling, a non-random method, was used to deliberately choose those involved in influencer marketing with the beauty industry who had the most relevant and extensive experience (Etikan et al. 2016). It not only assures the quality of information but also its alignment with the purposes of the study. The final group of participants consisted of:

- 15 social media influencers (10 micro-influencers having 5,000-50,000 followers and 5 macro-influencers with 50,000-200,000 followers, half of whom are of one gender and the other half of the other, also sharing specialization in different platforms to catch the variations in reach and method (StarNgage, 2025).
- 5 beauty brand reps, with three from locally owned SMEs and two from international brands, to give a view of differences in levels of resources and marketing priorities.
- 3 digital marketing professionals from well-known reaching agencies in Kampala, having beauty as one of their campaign categories.

Recruitment started with existing contacts in professional circles and public influencer lists (snowballing). Considering that the use of sampling stopped on the condition of theoretical saturation, no new ideas appeared with additional interviews (Guest et al. 2020), commonly met after 20-23 participants in similar qualitative studies.3.5 Data Collection Methods To increase validity by means of triangulation, various data sources were tapped (Flick, 2018).

#### **3.5.1 In-Depth Semi-Structured Interviews**

The semi-structured interviews were a major instrument for collecting data as they provided an opportunity for asking follow-up questions on new emerging issues while at the same time ensuring that the main research questions were addressed (Kallio et al. 2016).

An interview guide was used, consisting of open-ended questions that explore the different steps used in content creation, ways of keeping authenticity, methods used to engage the audience, experiences of cooperation, financial arrangements, worries about regulations and platform-specific challenges.

Each interview lasted 45-60 minutes. They were done either face-to-face (in public places that were safe in Kampala) or through the use of Zoom or WhatsApp video call, which was the most convenient for the participants in terms of both time and willingness. All interviews were recorded after getting a firm agreement from the participants. The recordings were then transcribed word for word so as not to lose any detail and for them to be thoroughly analysed.

### **3.5.2 Document and Content Review**

Secondary data came from reviewing systematically openly accessible digital materials over the period 2019-2025, which included more than 200 influencer posts, sponsorship campaign materials and commentary on X (formerly Twitter). The examination was mainly directed at the visual and text components like hashtags (#UgandanBeauty, #NaturalSkincareUG), captions, engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares) and modes of content creation (e.g., tutorials, before-and-after images). This archival method supported triangulation with interviews, furnishing tangible proof of the strategies and challenges communicated in the interviews while also enabling the observation of live changes (Bowen, 2009).

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was the method used to analyze the dataset of interviews and observations based on Braun and Clarke (2006). It is a very flexible and rigorous method suitable for qualitative research.

The six-step method is:

1. Getting familiar (e.g., reading transcripts many times).
2. Making initial codes (e.g., "personal product use, " "algorithm dependency").

3. Finding themes by gathering similar codes together or the codes that relate to each other.
4. Checking to make sure themes make sense overall and are different from one another.
5. Deciding on and naming the main themes (e.g., "Authenticity as Trust Currency, "Resource Asymmetry in Partnerships").
6. Writing the final story about the data with research questions and theory.

NVivo, a computer software, helped with the regular coding, arranging and finding the pieces of data. Supportive of thematic results were some descriptive statistics from content metrics (e.g., average engagement rates) without becoming quantitatively oriented.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

This research followed the ethical guidelines provided by the British Psychological Society (2021) and the local research environment. School research ethics committees are typically personified by the supervisor who, in this case, gave the formal ethical permission. Participants were given detailed information sheets and asked for their written or recorded informed consent. The key points highlighted were the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity and the right to withdraw.

Participants' personal information was not recorded; pseudonyms and collective descriptions are used to maintain confidentiality. Data were kept in password-protected, encrypted devices and will be deleted five years after the study. Special attention was devoted to mitigating power differentials in interviewer-interviewee relations and the cultural aspects of beauty standards in Uganda.

### **3.8 Summary**

In this chapter, a comprehensive qualitative methodology appropriate to the complexities of influencer marketing in Uganda's beauty and skincare sector has been outlined. The research design strategies discussed by means of purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, content review, thematic analysis as well as trustworthiness measures ensure that the study will yield reliable, richly detailed insights in their own contexts. Findings based on these methods will be shown and interpreted in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter reports and interprets the empirical data results of the qualitative research conducted in 2025, as specified in the way. We carried out semi-structured interviews with 23 subjects (15 social media personalities, 5 beauty brand representatives and 3 digital marketing experts). To these, we added a detailed analysis of more than 200 publicly available posts, campaigns and reports from 2019 to 2025 on platforms like Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and X.

This research has been able to highlight the major issues related to the research questions. Thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) method, brought to light two main themes: the first one is the tactics that influencers use to endorse beauty and skincare products and the second one is the difficulties that influencers and brands encounter when running campaigns.

These findings are situated within Uganda's digital and economic context, where social media penetration has reached 4.7% of the population by January 2025, with 2.40 million active users and Instagram recording an 11% year-over-year growth (DataReportal, 2025). The beauty and skincare market in Uganda is experiencing rapid growth and is expected to reach a revenue of US\$320.20 million in 2025, mainly due to changing lifestyles, demand for natural, locally sourced products and the influencer-led digital marketing (Modi, 2025). This trend is supported by a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.26% estimated till 2030, with the skincare sector alone growing at an 8.4% CAGR, driven by the youth index factors (77% under 30 years old) and rising imports which are projected to be worth US\$108 million by 2026 (IndexBox, 2025; StrategyHelix, 2025; Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022; Statista, 2025a).

Influencers are vital in this chain, as they use social media to market the products of brands while the consumer preference is changing in the direction of sustainable and indigenous ingredients like shea butter and aloe vera (Sagaci Research, n.d.). The results reveal how

these plans and difficulties influence the purchasing decisions of the customers in a country where 66% of the East African consumers are driven by social media to make beauty and fashion decisions (Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

#### 4.1 Participant Demographics and Profiles

Uganda's influencer marketing landscape within the beauty sector was broadly represented by participant demographics that were diversified with gender, age, experience and use of platforms. Table 4.1 delineates a well-organized view of the data, showing that many of the respondents were females (70%), a fact that is in line with the global and Ugandan trends where women make up 58.7% of Instagram users in Uganda and are the main creators of beauty content (NapoleonCat, 2025; Baraza Media Lab, 2025). The age bracket (22–45 years), then again, indicates the youth-oriented nature of the industry since most influencers are under 35, which is also the demographic responsible for 75% of influenced purchases in East Africa (Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

**Table 4.1: Participant Demographics and Profiles:**

Category	Number	Gender Breakdown (M/F)	Age Range	Key Platforms Used	Notable Examples/Insights
Social Media Influencers	15	3/12	22–35	Instagram (15), TikTok (13), YouTube (8)	Micro-influencers focused on relatability (e.g., @SheilahCarolGashumba, lifestyle/beauty with 50,000+ followers); Macro-influencers on scale (e.g., @BarbieKyagulanyi, skincare advocacy with 200,000+

					followers; Modash, 2025; StarNgage, 2025)
Beauty Brand Representatives	5	2/3	28–42	N/A	From local SMEs (e.g., Movit Cosmetics emphasizing natural products) and international affiliates (e.g., Nivea distributors; Wresearch, 2025–2031)
Digital Marketing Experts	3	1/2	35–45	N/A	Kampala-based agencies handling beauty campaigns, noting micro-influencer ROI (Baraza Media Lab, 2025)

Content review supplemented these profiles with real-world examples from prominent Ugandan beauty influencers, such as @BettinahTianah (founder of BT Beauty Uganda, specializing in organic shea butter skincare with over 50,000 followers) and @\_savage.goddess256 (promoting body positivity and melanin-rich products with 3.7k followers; AfroGazette News, 2024; Modash, 2025). Such influencers illustrate through their content how local ingredients can be incorporated in ways that both reflect and enhance consumer desire for sustainable beauty in East Africa, a region where 68% of consumers learn about new products through social media (Baraza Media Lab, 2025; Pierrine Consulting, n.d.). X posts served as a medium to explore this further with talks

around natural beauty, for instance, shea butter advertisements (X Post ID: 1968029104252314004, that also relies on influencer partnerships; X Post ID: 1959244412870852679, showing U.S. influencers' responses to Ugandan beauty).

## **4.2 Theme 1: Strategies Employed by Social Media**

Influencers in Promoting Beauty and Skin-Care Products. The first theme covers changes made to existing methods to fit the characteristics of Uganda's mostly young population (77% below 30) and the most visited places on the internet, where more than 80% of East African consumers enjoy short videos of less than 10 minutes duration about beauty (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022; Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

Four sub-themes were developed due to interview stories and content analysis, fitting into the global pattern where influencers account for 66% of beauty and fashion influences (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). The tactics focus on the real and natural because it is a market where people are keener on products that are natural and good for the environment, and at the same time, platforms like Instagram (65% preference) and TikTok allow achieving high levels of visibility (Statista, 2025a).

### **4.2.1 Authenticity and Relatability**

It was recognized over and over that authenticity is the main ingredient for a successful promotional campaign. It contributes to building trust in a skeptical East African consumer population that is wary of exaggerated endorsements (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). One micro-influencer remarked, "I only recommend products that I use, for example, local shea butter, because people can always tell if you're lying" (Interviewee 7). This is consistent with the finding that authentic content generates 15–20% more engagement (Osunsan et al. 2023).

To confirm this, brand representatives claimed that honest product reviews deliver better results than traditional advertisements. Besides, the analysis of the content disclosed that local dialects and cultural elements were used in the posts, such as natural hair styling and melanin-focused skincare routines, e.g., @\_savage. This is very much in line with narratives on African beauty, which, due to the diversity of skin colors, challenge universal

beauty standards (Gebashe et al. 2022; Pierrine Consulting, n.d.), as demonstrated on X in discussions that disapprove the use of artificial enhancements and espouse "natural beauty" (X Post ID: 1967958828923883697).

#### 4.2.2 Visual Storytelling and Platform Diversification

Influencers deliberately create different kinds of content on different platforms to maximize their audience: they use Instagram for visual Reels and product swatches; TikTok for "Get Ready With Me" (GRWM) videos and challenges; and YouTube for detailed tutorials (Jibril & Kumar, 2025). A well-known influencer said, "TikTok videos that are popular and also feature product integration spread quickly; Instagram is the platform where long-term loyalty is built" (Interviewee 12).

Hashtags like #NaturalSkincareUG and #UgandanBeauty are used to gain higher levels of exposure. At the same time, cross-posting is a way of strengthening brand communication (Chaffey, 2020).

In East Africa, 68% of the consumers find their beauty products through social media, with most of them being attracted to visual trends (Baraza Media Lab, 2025; Adebayo et al., 2025). Displays of makeup transformations by @zylander\_facebeats using local products (Modash, 2025) and beauty tours with collaboration partners featured on X (X Post ID: 1985393208839356550) are examples.

Table 4.2 gives an overview of platform-wise approaches and performance indicators based on the analysis of the content.

**Table 4.2: Platform-Specific Strategies and Engagement Metrics (From Content Review and East African Survey Data, 2025)**

Platform	Key Strategies	Average Engagement Rate (%)	Examples from Ugandan Influencers	Regional Insights (Baraza Media Lab, 2025)

Instagram	Aesthetic feeds, Reels, product swatches	15–20	@NadiaMatovu : Unboxings with local ingredients like aloe vera	Preferred by 65% for influencer follows; high for beauty discovery
TikTok	Short trends, GRWM videos, challenges	20–25	@MethiaNabawanda : Viral dances integrating skincare routines	63% usage; ideal for short-form fashion/beauty content
YouTube	In-depth reviews, tutorials	10–15	@AngellaSummerNamubiru: Hyperpigmentation routines using shea butter	13% preference, but key for educational depth

### 4.2.3 Building Credibility Through Expertise and Value Alignment

For example, educational posts talking about ingredients is one way to build up the audience's confidence in your being credible (Yusuf & Muktar, 2025). Ethical alignment with cruelty-free and local sourcing successfully mitigates "sellout" backlash as shown by the discussions on X (Sseguya, 2021; X Post ID: 1957523748917244408). Micro-influencers or "medfluencers" are a better alternative when it comes to niche expertise, and that is one of the main reasons why they are able to create a deeper level of trust than the bigger ones (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). Hosting giveaways and having live sessions are some of the ways that a community can be made, for example, through the body positivity projects of @\_savage.goddess256 (Modash, 2025).

#### **4.2.4 Engagement Tactics**

Polling, Q&A sessions, and co-creation of content are the types of interactive techniques that act as a way to build engagement (Osunsan et al. 2023). Social Influence Theory suggests that these kinds of identification and internalization lead to persuasion (Kelman, 1958).

The East African context is such that de-influencing is used as a means of counteracting the problem of overexposure by the use of genuine recommendations (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). Examples of collaborative beauty trips that increase engagement (X Post ID: 1984971107741413853).

### **4.3 Theme 2: Challenges Faced by Influencers and Beauty Brands**

Due to low social media penetration (4.7%) and urban-rural divides, campaigns are not that effective, which is a systemic problem (DataReportal, 2025; Economic Policy Research Centre, 2024). Many East African consumers (over 75%) spend up to \$100 one year on the influenced products, while the trust issue keeps rising (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). Issues with the sub-themes that highlight regional problems like saturation and regulatory gaps (Dotts Media House, 2025; Aspire, n.d.).

#### **4.3.1 Financial and Resource Constraints**

Having a tight budget is one of the causes that leads to product exchange as a form of payment, which demotivates influencers (Mbego, 2025).

SMEs are struggling to cope with increased production costs and payment delays of 4+ months, which are further compounded by currency depreciation and import inflation (IndexBox, 2025). Market fragmentation in Africa is a major challenge for the micro-influencers who are seeking to optimize the use of their resources (Molefe & Ralephata, 2024). There are posts on X that reference a lack of funds in merged projects (X Post ID: 1998778109764518200).

### 4.3.2 Regulatory and Ethical Issues

The level of trust is being undermined due to the weak enforcement of disclosures by the Uganda Communications Commission (Smith, 2025). Besides tax issues, the promotion of products that do not match the reality of the product is becoming a problem. So that misinformation can be dealt with, there is a need for the setup of East African standards (Baraza Media Lab, 2025; Turyasingura, 2020).

Exempting foreign brands only intensifies competition among brands, some unfairly (Bett, 2025).  
 4.3.3 Algorithmic and Saturation Challenges: Algorithms that push paid content severely limit the exposure of organic content. Because of this, the problem of saturation and audience fatigue will be aggravated (Adebayo et al. 2025; Akin-Odukoya & Okunade, 2025).

Over the year 2025, the number of engagements went down because of the excessive promotions, which could cause people to stop following (Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

Table 4.3 illustrates the challenges with their frequencies and the actions that are taken to solve them.

**Table 4.3: Challenges, Frequency from Interviews, Supporting Evidence, Regional Insights, and Mitigations**

Challenge	Frequency (Out of 23)	Evidence from Content Review/X Posts	Regional Insights (Baraza Media Lab, 2025)	Mitigation Suggestions
Financial Constraints	18	Product swaps are common; delays (Osunsan et al., 2023; X Post ID: 1998778109764518200)	Budget limits hinder nano/micro growth in East Africa	Fair compensation models; grant funding

Regulatory/ Ethical Ambiguity	15	Undisclosed sponsorships (Mwesigye, 2023)	Ethical concerns like misinformation, the need for regulations	Mandatory #Ad disclosures; industry codes
Algorithmic/ Saturation	14	Declining engagement (Kalemera, 2021)	Overhyping damages reputation	Content diversification; de-influencing
Cultural/Representation	12	Global vs. local tensions (Gebashe et al., 2022; X Post ID: 1965439886577869026)	Gender biases in conservative areas (Molefe & Ralephata, 2024)	Inclusive, localized narratives
Infrastructure Limitations	10	Outages hinder operations (Uganda Communications Commission, 2023)	Digital divides limit accessibility	Infrastructure investments; offline tools

#### 4.3.4 Cultural and Representation Issues

Conflicts between international beauty standards (e.g., lighter skin) and the individual's natural identity are the reason for the rejection of the foreign products (Tapera et al. 2025). Even though there are still significant inclusiveness loopholes for different skin tones, local brands are on the right path (Pierrine Consulting, n.d.).

Discrimination based on gender is still affecting the female influencers in very conservative contexts (Molefe & Ralephata, 2024). X posts show the emphasis on the cultural identity and pride in natural beauty (X Post ID: 1965439886577869026).

### **4.3.5 Infrastructure Limitations**

Frequent power failures and limited internet access deter expansion efforts, mainly in rural areas (Fido Uganda, 2025). These are similar to the other Alice's barriers, like data access (Molefe & Ralephata, 2024). These findings strongly match the African ones, as the two advocate for partnerships that are sustainable to be able to solve the problems related to saturation and ethics (Omanga et al. 2023; Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

### **4.4 Summary**

Ugandan influencers have shown from their data that they are able to promote beauty products excellently through a genuine approach and diversifying their platforms, helping in building trust and engagement, in particular among the youth. But financial regulatory algorithmic, cultural and infrastructural challenges limit their effectiveness. By cross-checking with the content and X posts, these insights can be confirmed, showing more engagement for real content. These results lead to Chapter V, where they are connected to literature, theory and implications.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter combines the information from chapter four to integrate the literature, the theoretical setup of this study (Social influence theory, Uses and gratifications theory and Chaffey's digital marketing structure) and the research objectives.

Also, it offers an analysis of the participation of social media influencers in marketing beauty and skincare products in Uganda. As the arguments are based on qualitative data collected through interviews, content analysis and X posts, they also reveal the setup of the sector as it evolves. Due to the influence of the marketing measures around the influencer on digital platforms, urbanization, and the consumers' inclination to use natural cosmetics products, the cosmetics sector in Uganda is doing well.

Cosmetic products will alone generate an income of US\$ 320.20 million by 2025, while the annual growth rate (CAGR) will up to 2030 be 4.29% (Statista, 2025b). This is also supported by the trend in East Africa, where social media influences 66% of beauty buying decisions, which would prompt one to select ethical influencer marketing as it is the key to unlocking the growing beauty product market (Baraza Media Lab, 2025). The concluding chapter consists of the results, recommendations, limitations and recommendations for future research as the results are translated into actionable guides for the different stakeholders involved.

#### 5.1 Discussion of Findings

This topic will be divided into two main objectives that will merge the narration and the facts and applying a model, highlight how the Uganda reality is a fraction of the African and Global reality.

### **5.1.1 Strategies Employed by Influencers**

While the four identified strategies are being authentic and relatable, telling stories visually and diversifying platforms, building credibility through expertise and aligning values and also engages using interactive methods, they resonate not only in global literature but also show some of the cultural and socio-economic differences of Uganda.

Authenticity (like these original endorsements of local ingredients like shea butter and aloe vera) is one of the most important factors in responding to consumer uncertainties and raising consumer participation levels by 15-20%. Authenticity is preferred within East Africa, as 66% of purchases in the category of beauty are bought with authentic content (De Veirman et al.2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

This is also a tactic practiced in Social Influence Theory that reinforces followers' respect for the authentic social media personalities (e.g., natural hair advocates) who communicate in their indigenous language and culture, thereby fostering greater confidence and buying tendency (Kelman, 1958).

But, the Instagram web visuals, the TikTok things and the Juxtaposition of YouTube are, per Chaffey's (2020) directives on multi-touchpoint mixing, to accrete message repetition among the 2.40 million Ugandan social media populace (DataReportal, 2025). Skincareedu, like hyperpigmentation, is consistent with the Media-related Use and Gratifications motivations (Informational, Self-expressive; Katz,1974). Micro-influencers that are niche, ethical (cruelty-free, locally sourced, etc) Dispositions outperform the traditional macro-ones for a trust-building context a popular South African motif, although with different needs, affordability for SME in a sustainability-zeal (Motara,2022; Gebashe et al. 2022) market.

Finally, employing long-term loyalty-building mechanisms like de-influencing, which discourages overconsumption and saturation, a response to the saturation of the building on short-form videos preferred place (Baraza Media Lab, 2025), is a combined long-term solution, both benefiting from the youth demographic as the most optimal way to adapt the promotion into a culturally-sensitive one (Statista, 2025b).

### **5.1.2 Challenges Faced**

All these issues, like a lack of finance, regulation and ethical concerns, overdependence on algorithms, poor cultural inclusion and infrastructure, relate to African literature, but they show Uganda's rather diverse range of issues.

Financial issues, including product swaps and late payments, have affected import costs due to the resource opening gap between developed and emerging economies. Because of this, discouraging the authors and the transmission became inconsistent (Mbego, 2025; Molefe & Ralephata, 2024; IndexBox, 2025).

Regulatory loopholes like the lack of enforcement of the disclosure can worsen ethical issues, e.g., the unfounded claims, and that is the same with the remaining section of the East Africans, in which the people have been requesting anti-misinformation legislation and ways of getting a trustworthy campaign (Smith, 2025; Baraza Media Lab, 2025; Turyasingura, 2020).

The preference algorithms used for paid placement are overly saturated with content, losing the audience to sleep, organic reach is severely limited and it is very difficult to be discovered (Adebayo et al.2025; Akin-Odukoya & Okunade, 2025).

This imbalance between the world standards and the local environment, often worsened by gender stereotyping, is the reason for the criticism and the gaps in the depiction of the country, which have all been faced by the whole of the African continent (Gebashe et al. 2022; Molefe & Ralephata, 2024). The infrastructural problems like electricity power cuts were the last straw in a situation where the urban-rural divide as and the connectivity (internet access) is too high (4.7%; DataReportal, 2025). It is for these reasons that Social Influence Theory fails to hold any weight as credibility is one of the issues that is being eroded and raised in reference to the literature, the research on the rising cost (Economic Policy Research Centre, 2024; Baraza Media Lab, 2025).

The main factors affecting the market for cosmetics in Uganda are social media influences. Tanzania is expected to be valued at \$320.20 an SAGR of 4.29% in 2025 dollars through 2030, with broad ranges and multiple strategies that paint confidence and contribute to youth buying in (Statista, 2025b). Those micro-influencers who adopt a mainstream

approach to buying authentic, natural, local products are the best investment for the financial and other resource-constrained SMEs by the Social Influence Theory using mechanisms of identification and internalization (Kelman, 1958).

Yet, the main constraining factors for the growth of the market are the long-standing issues (financial, infrastructural and regulatory, algorithmic and cultural), which are consistent with the East African experiences of saturation and doubt. (Baraza Media Lab, 2025) In this study, we have reached the situation that the dissemination of ethical standards like redistribution of influence (de-influencing) and transparency of some networked cooperation, not neglecting the improvement of the infrastructure, would be the instruments to sustain the growth of a market leaning, as it is, to more natural and influencer-influenced products.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

Based on the insight and literature above, the subsequent recommendations for relevant parties are suggested.

1. For Influencers. Focus on transparency with regular disclosures, honest product matching and de-influencing to tackle saturation and improve trust (NewH, 2023; Bett, 2025), build knowledge in e.g., keywords, and consumer behaviour, and in nuts-and-bolts skills like analytics (Bett, 2025; Baraza Media Lab, 2025)
2. For 'Beauty Brands'. Prefer long-term micro-influencer collaborations with fair remuneration and co-developed, culturally diversified content integrating indigenous products. Use data analytics for focused campaigns; value sincere interaction over high frequency (Osunsan et al. 2023; Pierrine Consulting, n.d.).
3. For Pils and Regulators. Develop strong policies requiring transparency, fighting fake engagement & encouraging ethical practices; prioritize spending on digital infrastructure to reduce the urban-rural gap & enable growth (Smith, 2025 & Turyasingura, 2020).
4. On social media platforms. Optimize algorithms for low-informational, educational content, mainly in developing markets; roll out disclosure tools and analytics for creators to improve sustainability (Adebayo et al. 2025; Molefe & Ralephata, 2024).

**Table 5.2: Summary of Recommendations by Stakeholder:**

Stakeholder	Primary Recommendations	Supporting Rationale
Influencers	Transparency, de-influencing, skill development	Enhances trust amid skepticism (Baraza Media Lab, 2025)
Beauty Brands	Micro-partnerships, fair pay, inclusive local content	Mitigates financial constraints (Osunsan et al., 2023)
Policymakers	Disclosure enforcement, infrastructure investment	Addresses regulatory gaps (Smith, 2025)
Platforms	Organic content prioritization, compliance tools	Counters algorithmic biases (Adebayo et al., 2025)

### 5.3 Limitations

Statistical generalisability is limited given the qualitative nature of this study. Data cannot be generalized to rural Uganda, solely to cities (Kampala, Wakiso and Entebbe), where obstacles to access still exist (DataReportal, 2025). Questioning relies on self-report, which can be limited by social desirability bias, and may not be heavily weighted by macro-influencers or new platforms.

### 5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Numerical studies of campaign ROI (e.g., conversion rates) would supplement these results (Jibril & Kumar, 2025). Cross-country differences could be teased out through comparative East African research, even as the potential of AI for content tailoring or rural influencer dynamics is deserving of a focus (Baraza Media Lab, 2025; Molefe & Ralephata, 2024). The influence of post 2025 changes, with the growth of e-commerce integration, could also be tracked through longitudinal research.

## **5.5 Summary**

This study and how it contributes to theory and practice show us that social media influencers play a functional but also limited role in the cosmetics industry in Uganda. It also offers the theoretical foundation and solution to these challenges by providing specific recommendations to ensure the maximization of influence potential in ensuring business growth and continued customer confidence for the cosmetics industry.

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