

Social Media Influencers and Brand Image: A Case Study of Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC),

Kampala, Uganda

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between social media influencers and the brand image of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), Kampala. As audiences increasingly migrate to digital platforms and place trust in influential online personalities, media organisations have turned to influencer marketing to shape public perception. The study investigated how influencer credibility, content quality, audience engagement, and influencer–brand fit relate to UBC's brand image. A cross-sectional survey design with a mixed-methods approach was adopted, and data were collected from 200 respondents comprising UBC audiences, marketing staff, and social media followers using structured questionnaires and interviews. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression-based path analysis were used. The results revealed a strong positive and significant relationship between social media influencers and brand image ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), with the influencer dimensions jointly explaining 61.0% of the variance in brand image ($R^2 = 0.610$). Influencer credibility and content quality emerged as the strongest predictors. The study concludes that social media influencers significantly shape UBC's brand image and recommends strategic selection of credible, well-aligned influencers and investment in high-quality content.

Keywords: social media influencers, brand image, influencer credibility, content quality, UBC, Uganda

1.0 Introduction

The rise of social media has fundamentally transformed the way organisations build and manage their brand image. In an environment where audiences spend increasing amounts of time on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube, the traditional levers of brand communication have been supplemented, and in some cases supplanted, by the influence of individuals who command large and engaged online followings (De Veirman et al., 2021). These social media influencers function as opinion leaders whose endorsements, commentary, and content shape the perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours of their audiences, making them powerful intermediaries between organisations and the publics they seek to reach (Hudders et al., 2021).

Brand image—the set of perceptions, associations, and impressions that audiences hold about an organisation—is a critical intangible asset that shapes trust, loyalty, and engagement (Keller, 2021). For a media organisation such as the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, the national public broadcaster, brand image is especially consequential, since it conditions audience trust in the corporation's content, its perceived relevance in a competitive media landscape, and its capacity to attract audiences and advertisers (Christopher & Nelson, 2024). As Ugandan audiences, particularly younger ones, increasingly consume information through digital and social channels, UBC's brand image is shaped not only by its broadcast output but also by how it is represented and discussed across social media, including by influencers (Wasswa & Namubiru, 2022).

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Influencer marketing operates through several mechanisms. The credibility of an influencer—their perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and authenticity—conditions the persuasive power of their endorsements (Ohanian, 1990/2021; Hudders et al., 2021). The quality of the content they produce shapes audience engagement and the impression conveyed about the associated brand. Audience engagement—likes, shares, comments, and conversation amplifies reach and signals resonance (Frank et al., 2023). And the fit between the influencer and the brand determines whether the association feels authentic or contrived, with poor fit capable of damaging rather than enhancing brand image (De Veirman et al., 2021). Understanding how these dimensions relate to brand image is therefore central to the effective use of influencer marketing (A. I. Kazaara & Nancy, 2026).

Although influencer marketing has been extensively studied in commercial and Western contexts, empirical evidence on its relationship with the brand image of public media organisations in Uganda remains limited, and few studies disaggregate the relative contribution of distinct influencer dimensions (Wasswa & Namubiru, 2022; Nakalema & Opio, 2023). This study addresses that gap by examining, through correlation and regression-based path analysis, how influencer credibility, content quality, audience engagement, and influencer–brand fit relate to UBC's brand image (Julius & Audrey, 2026). The findings are significant for UBC's management, media marketers, and communication scholars (Sophie & Crispus, 2024). The article proceeds with the problem statement, objectives, literature review, methodology, results and interpretation, and conclusions.

2.0 Statement of the Problem

As Ugandan audiences migrate to digital platforms, the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation has increasingly relied on social media, including engagement with influencers, to build and sustain its brand image (Wasswa & Namubiru, 2022). Ideally, well-chosen influencers should enhance the corporation's image by extending its reach, lending credibility, and generating positive engagement (A. G. Kazaara et al., 2023). In practice, however, UBC continues to face challenges of audience perception and competition from private and digital-native media, and the extent to which social media influencers actually shape its brand image has not been established through rigorous empirical research (Nakalema & Opio, 2023).

The relationship is not straightforward. Influencer marketing carries risks as well as benefits: influencers of low credibility, poor content quality, or weak fit with the brand may fail to enhance, or may even damage, brand image (De Veirman et al., 2021; Hudders et al., 2021). Without evidence on which influencer dimensions most strongly shape brand image, UBC risks investing in influencer partnerships that yield limited or negative returns (Phionah et al., 2023). If this gap remains unaddressed, the corporation may continue to allocate scarce marketing resources without a defensible basis, and its brand image may weaken in an increasingly competitive landscape (A. G. Kazaara & Julius, 2025). This study therefore sought to establish the relationship between social media influencers and UBC's brand image and to identify the most influential dimensions.

3.0 Main Objective

The main objective of the study was to examine the relationship between social media influencers and the brand image of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, Kampala.

3.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To assess the use of social media influencers by UBC in Kampala.
- ii. To establish the relationship between influencer dimensions (credibility, content quality, audience engagement, and influencer–brand fit) and brand image.
- iii. To determine the relative contribution of each influencer dimension to brand image.

4.0 Literature Review

Research on influencer marketing and brand image draws on source credibility theory, the meaning-transfer model, and brand equity theory. Source credibility theory holds that the persuasiveness of a message depends on the perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness of its source, explaining why credible influencers exert greater influence on audience perceptions (Ohanian, 1990/2021). The meaning-transfer model posits that the cultural meanings associated with an endorser transfer to the endorsed brand, implying that the fit between influencer and brand shapes the associations conveyed (McCracken, 1989/2021). Brand equity theory frames brand image as a core component of brand equity that drives audience trust, loyalty, and value (Keller, 2021).

Empirical studies broadly confirm that social media influencers shape brand perceptions. Research finds that influencer endorsements enhance brand awareness, attitudes, and image, particularly among younger, digitally engaged audiences (De Veirman et al., 2021; Hudders et al., 2021). Studies in African media contexts similarly report that social media personalities significantly influence audience perceptions of media brands, though the effect depends on authenticity and fit (Wasswa & Namubiru, 2022; Nakalema & Opio, 2023).

Influencer credibility features prominently as the decisive dimension. Studies consistently show that credible influencers—those perceived as trustworthy, expert, and authentic—exert the strongest influence on brand image, while low-credibility influencers can undermine it (Ohanian, 1990/2021; Hudders et al., 2021). Content quality forms a second theme: well-produced, relevant, and engaging content shapes favourable impressions and sustains audience attention (De Veirman et al., 2021). Audience engagement constitutes a third theme, since likes, shares, and comments amplify reach and signal resonance, reinforcing brand associations (Keller, 2021). Influencer–brand fit forms a fourth theme: the meaning-transfer model and empirical evidence indicate that a strong, authentic fit enhances brand image, whereas poor fit produces dissonance that can damage it (McCracken, 1989/2021; De Veirman et al., 2021). Despite this body of work, few studies quantify and compare these dimensions for a public media brand in Uganda, a gap this study addresses.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design with a mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The quantitative component measured variables and tested relationships, while the qualitative component provided contextual depth on influencer practices and audience perceptions.

5.2 Study Population and Area

The study was conducted in Kampala, focusing on the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation. The target population comprised UBC audiences and social media followers, together with UBC marketing and communication staff, who together provided audience and organisational perspectives on influencer marketing and brand image (Bekkers & Edwards, 2015).

5.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A sample of 200 respondents was drawn, comprising 160 audience members and social media followers and 40 UBC staff. The sample size was determined with reference to the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) guidelines. Followers were selected using systematic and convenience sampling online, while staff were selected purposively as key informants (Nafiu, 2012).

5.4 Data Collection Instruments

A structured questionnaire measured the influencer dimensions—credibility, content quality, audience engagement, and influencer–brand fit—and brand image on a five-point Likert scale. An interview guide was used with UBC staff to obtain qualitative insights into influencer strategy and brand management (Sarah et al., 2024).

5.5 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established through expert review, yielding a content validity index above 0.70 (Amin, 2005). Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 for the influencer scale, indicating high internal consistency.

5.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). Descriptive statistics summarised the variables; Pearson correlation established the strength and direction of relationships; and regression-based path analysis quantified the combined and relative effects of the influencer dimensions on brand image. Qualitative data were analysed thematically (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

5.7 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout (Creswell & Creswell, 2021).

6.0 Results and Interpretation

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics based on responses from the 200 participants.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
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Influencer credibility	3.62	0.78	High
Content quality	3.71	0.74	High
Audience engagement	3.55	0.81	High
Influencer–brand fit	3.28	0.88	Moderate
Overall influencer marketing	3.54	0.71	High
Brand image	3.49	0.73	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The descriptive results in Table 1 indicate that UBC's use of social media influencers was rated moderate to high, with an overall mean of 3.54. Content quality recorded the highest mean (3.71), followed by influencer credibility (3.62) and audience engagement (3.55), while influencer–brand fit recorded the lowest mean (3.28), suggesting that the alignment between influencers and the UBC brand was the weakest dimension—an important observation given that fit conditions the authenticity of endorsements (De Veirman et al., 2021; McCracken, 1989/2021). Brand image was rated moderate (3.49)(Faridah et al., 2023). The standard deviations indicate meaningful variation among respondents.

6.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was computed to establish the relationships between the influencer dimensions and brand image (Table 2).

Variable	Brand Image (r)	Sig. (p)
Influencer credibility	0.61	0.000
Content quality	0.58	0.000
Audience engagement	0.52	0.000
Influencer–brand fit	0.48	0.000
Overall influencer marketing	0.65	0.000

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The correlation results in Table 2 show that all four dimensions were positively and significantly associated with brand image at the 0.01 level(Nelson et al., 2023). Overall influencer marketing correlated strongly with brand image ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that social media influencers shape UBC's brand image, consistent with source credibility and brand equity theory (Ohanian, 1990/2021; Keller, 2021). Influencer credibility recorded the strongest individual association ($r = 0.61$), underscoring the primacy of trustworthiness and authenticity (Hudders et al., 2021), followed by content quality ($r = 0.58$). Audience engagement ($r = 0.52$) and influencer–brand fit ($r = 0.48$) were also significant, though more moderate. The consistently positive pattern supports the study's central proposition(Julius & Audrey, 2025).

6.3 Regression-Based Path Analysis

A regression-based path model was estimated to determine the combined and relative effects of the influencer dimensions on brand image. Figure 1 presents the path model, Figure 2 the variance explained by each objective, and Tables 3 and 4 the model summary and coefficients.

Path Model: Social Media Influencers → Brand Image

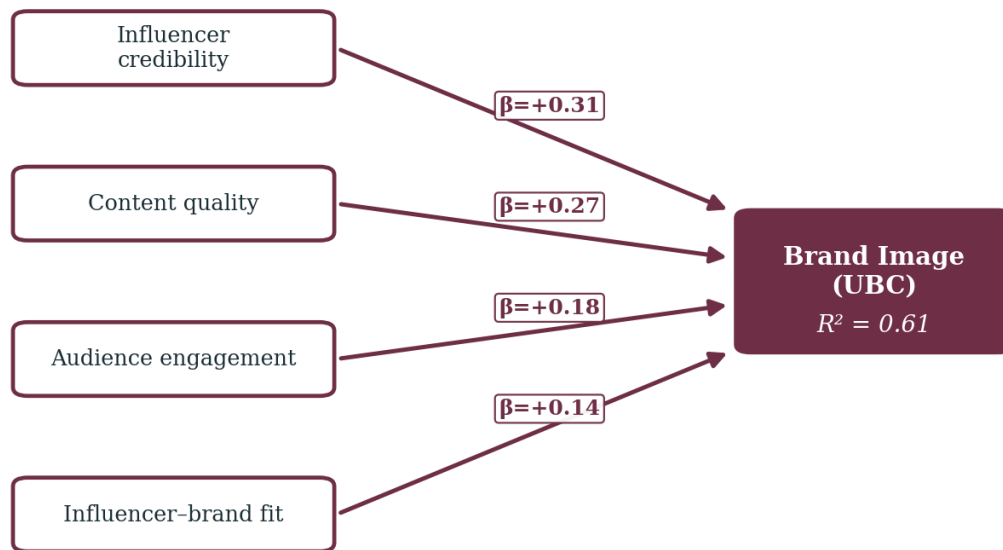


Figure 1: Path model of social media influencers and UBC brand image (standardised β , $R^2 = 0.61$).

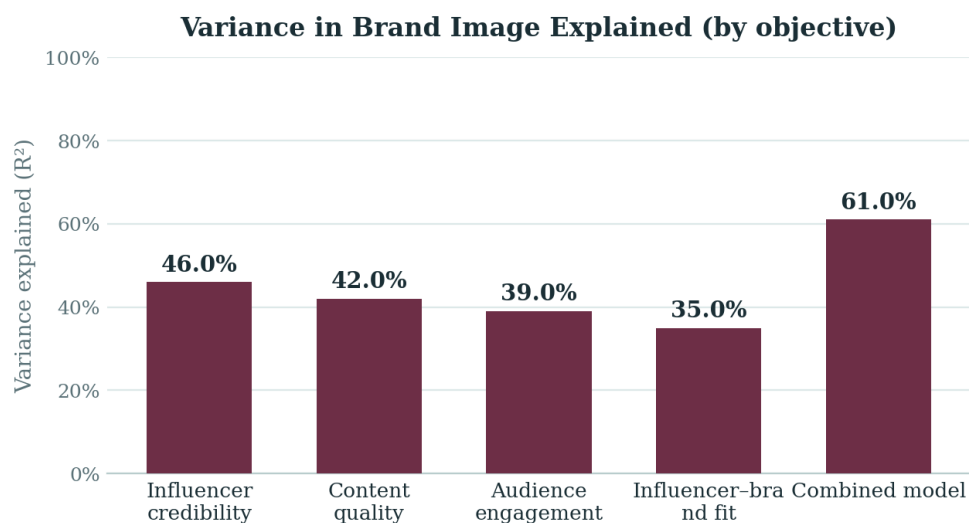


Figure 2: Variance in brand image explained across the study objectives.

Model Summary		Value	
R		0.781	
R Square		0.610	
Adjusted R Square		0.602	
Std. Error of Estimate		0.461	
F (4, 195)		76.24 (p = 0.000)	
Predictor	Beta (β)	t	Sig. (p)
Influencer credibility	0.31	4.72	0.000
Content quality	0.27	4.08	0.000
Audience engagement	0.18	2.81	0.005
Influencer–brand fit	0.14	2.20	0.029

Source: Primary Data, 2025

The regression model summary in Table 3 indicates that the four influencer dimensions jointly explained 61.0% of the variance in brand image ($R^2 = 0.610$), a large proportion establishing influencer marketing as a major driver of UBC's brand image. The model was highly significant ($F(4, 195) = 76.24, p < 0.01$). The remaining 39.0% of variance reflects other factors such as broadcast content quality, competitor activity, and organisational reputation (Keller, 2021).

The standardised coefficients in Table 4, visualised in Figure 1, show that influencer credibility was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$), confirming that the perceived trustworthiness and authenticity of influencers most strongly shape brand image, in line with source credibility theory (Ohanian, 1990/2021; Hudders et al., 2021). Content quality followed ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$), demonstrating that well-produced content materially enhances brand image. Audience engagement ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.01$) and influencer–brand fit ($\beta = 0.14, p < 0.05$) contributed positively but more modestly. Notably, influencer–brand fit was both the lowest-rated dimension descriptively and the weakest predictor, suggesting a specific area where UBC could strengthen its influencer strategy by selecting personalities whose image aligns authentically with the corporation (De Veirman et al., 2021; McCracken, 1989/2021).

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that social media influencers have a strong, positive, and significant relationship with UBC's brand image, with influencer credibility and content quality being the most influential dimensions. It is recommended that UBC prioritise partnerships with credible, authentic influencers (Hudders et al., 2021); invest in high-quality, relevant content (De Veirman et al., 2021); strengthen influencer–brand fit through careful selection (McCracken, 1989/2021); and monitor engagement to guide strategy (Keller, 2021). Future research could employ objective brand-tracking data and experimental designs to further establish causality.

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