

Does Social Media Influencer Marketing Change Consumers Perception of Energy Drinks? A Case Study of Monster Energy Drink

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Abstract- In recent years, social media influencer marketing has grown in popularity and importance as a marketing technique for businesses. Literature demonstrates that it produces better results than standard marketing strategies. As a result, numerous businesses, including energy drink companies, are using this method to attract customers. Although it is well known that SMIs marketing is used to promote energy drinks, and that SMIs have the ability to positively and negatively influence consumer perception of products, little attention has been paid to the impact of social media influencer marketing on how consumers perceive energy drinks, particularly in Nigeria, thus the need for this study. The aim of this study was to look into the impact of social media influencer marketing on customers' perceptions of energy drinks. This study used a quantitative research approach with a sample size of 384 people, but only 231 people responded. According to the findings of this survey, the majority of participants (58.4%) were between the ages of 26 and 32, followed by those between the ages of 18 and 25 (30.3%), and the least number of participants (11.2%) were between the ages of 33 and 45. The majority of participants (65.4%) were male, with 34.6% being female, and while Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok were determined to be the most popular social media networks, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Facebook were revealed to be the least popular. Correlation analysis indicated a significant association between influencer marketing and consumers' perceptions of monster energy drink's taste, quality, risks, and benefits. The study also discovered that the impact of influencer marketing on customer perception is ascribed to the peripheral characteristics of social media influencers such as expertise, entertainment, credibility, attractiveness, product match-up, informativeness, and others. Furthermore, the recent study found that influencer

marketing influenced customers' purchasing intentions for Monster Energy Drink significantly.

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

With the rise and adoption of social media, new and novel marketing methods have emerged (Tiago & Verssimo, 2014; Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Traditional marketing methods employed by businesses in the past have grown obsolete, and some businesses believe they are not as effective in reaching target audience (Tiago & Verssimo, 2014; Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). Companies have begun to seek out and use more effective marketing strategies, which has led them to social media marketing, which allows brands to market their products on social media platforms (Kirtis & Karahan, 2011). At the same time, brands have become aware of individuals who are very active on social media platforms, have a large audience on these platforms, and can use these platforms to convey information and greatly influence their audiences' opinions and actions (Moreno et al., 2015). These people are known as social media influencers (SMIs).

SMIs have increased in popularity over the years due to their effectiveness in promoting brands and marketing their products, a phenomena known as Influencer marketing. Brands locate individuals (influencers) whose beliefs coincide with their brand's ideals and work with them to advertise their products to potential customers (Sammis et al., 2015; More & Lingam, 2017). These individuals are trusted by the brand to be capable of successfully marketing the brand's products because their jobs as influencers allows them to be able to influence the behaviours and opinions of other social media users through their own social media activities. According to Ge and Gretzel (2018), the audience's faith in these influencers is what

inspires them to purchase recommended products or engage with a brand. Furthermore, because they have hundreds to millions of followers on their social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube), they can help brands/companies target a larger client base than the brand could with their own resources (Freberg et al., 2011). Lou and Yuan (2019) refers to the marketing method (i.e social media influencer marketing) as electronic word-of-mouth, explaining that it allows SMIs recommend or review products or services in a way that their target audience can relate to.

Also key to social media influencers is their impact on consumers' perception of brands, their products and services (Thiruvengatraj & Vetrivel, 2017). In line with this, 29% of respondents in a survey reported that influencer marketing negatively impacted their perception of brands, while 21% stated that influencer marketing positively impacted their perception of recommended brands (Valentina, 2023). Consumer perception refers to how a customer views a brand and its products or services; this could be in terms of quality, value, benefits etc. (Thiruvengatraj & Vetrivel, 2017). It may also be defined as the process through which a customer/consumer selects, organizes, and interprets information to develop a picture of a brand, product, or service and aid in purchasing or consumption decisions (Thiruvengatraj & Vetrivel, 2017). Consumer perception influences customers'/consumers' purchasing intentions, loyalty, and satisfaction with brands and what they offer, which has an impact on an organization's success, productivity, and profitability (Thiruvengatraj & Vetrivel, 2017).

Energy drinks (ED) are a new type of non-alcoholic beverages that contain caffeine, herbal extracts, taurine, and other stimulants; when taken, they give consumers energy boost and mental alertness (Ali et al. 2015; Visram et al. 2017). Though energy drinks have these benefits, they are frequently criticised for their health concerns, which can be fatal and life-threatening (Kumar et al., 2015; Ghosayel et al., 2020). Despite this disadvantage which has been a cause for concern over the years, energy drinks continue to grow in popularity and continue to be consumed, particularly among young adults and youths. In Canada (Azagba et al., 2014), consumption

of ED was reported to be as high as 62% among high school students, and this trend was consistent with the consumption rate reported in other countries including Nigeria (Olatona et al., 2018), USA (Kumar et al., 2015), UK (Khouja et al., 2022), and Australia (Trapp et al., 2014). Furthermore, the market for energy drinks is large and likely to grow further, with a value of \$159 billion in 2021 and a projected value of \$233 billion in 2027 (Ridder, 2022).

The rising popularity, market share, and consumption of ED has been attributed to considerable marketing and promotion of these goods, which has included social media influencer marketing in recent times (Buchanan et al., 2017; Bhartari & Agarwal, 2022). Although it is known that SMIs market promote ED and that SMIs are capable of positively and negatively influencing consumer perception of products, attention has not been paid to the impact of social media influencer marketing on how consumers perceive ED especially in Nigeria, hence this study.

This study aims to investigate and assess the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumers' perceptions and, as a result, purchasing intentions of energy drinks, with a specific focus on Monster energy drink, which has the second largest market share in the energy drinks market (Ridder, 2022). Specifically, the study will investigate the impact of SMI marketing on consumers' perception of the quality, taste, benefits and risks of ED. Furthermore, given the scarcity of research on the effect SMI marketing has in changing customers' perceptions of energy drinks in Nigeria, this study aims to address the literature gap while also contributing to the current literature on the effect of SMI. The current investigation will also provide informed insights regarding the potentials of SMIs in terms of customer perception, which may be used by energy drink companies as well as other companies or brands and marketers.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. Does influencer marketing affect consumers' perception of the taste and quality of monster energy drink?
- ii. Does influencer marketing affect consumers' perception of the benefits and risks of monster energy drink?
- iii. Does influencer marketing affect

consumers purchasing intention of monster energy drink?

1.3 Objectives:

- i. To investigate the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' perception of the taste and quality of monster energy drink
- ii. To evaluate the effect of influencer marketing on consumers' perception of the benefits and risks of monster energy drink.
- iii. To evaluate the impact of influencer marketing on consumers purchasing intention of monster energy drink.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study will add to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the effect of social media influencer marketing on consumers' perceptions of energy drinks. In literature, the influence of social media influencer marketing on consumers' perceptions of energy drinks has not been investigated in Nigeria, thus this study will provide insight and fill this research gap. The study's findings will also serve as a foundation for future research and inform energy drink companies looking to leverage social media influencer marketing to positively influence consumer perception of their products.

1.5 Research Structure

This dissertation is organized in six chapters as seen below:

Chapter one (Introduction): This is the present chapter and contains the background, rationale, objectives, as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter two (Literature Review): This chapter includes a review of relevant literature on social media influencer marketing, types of social media influencers, factors influencing the effectiveness of social media influencer marketing, such as credibility and trust, and the role social media influencers play in changing consumers' perceptions of products. This chapter will also examine theoretical frameworks that underpins this study.

Chapter three (Research Methodology): In this chapter, the research design, study population, sample size, sampling technique, data collection method as well as instrument for data collection will be

discussed. Also covered in this chapter is the technique used to statistically analyse the data collected.

Chapter four (Results, analysis, and findings): This chapter focuses on presenting the analysed data gathered through the survey method (online questionnaire) in a clear and organised manner. The analysed data will be presented using tables, graphical representations and figures in a way that facilitates comprehension of the research objectives and answers the study's research questions.

Chapter five (Discussion): This chapter covers the discussion and interpretation of the results obtained in the study. The findings will be compared to existing literature and contributions made to the field of social media influencer marketing and its impact on consumer perception of energy drinks will be highlighted.

Chapter six (Conclusion): The findings of the study will be summarised in this chapter, and a conclusion will be drawn. This chapter would also include recommendations for marketers and energy drink companies based on the study's findings, recommendations for future studies, and limitations of the study.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines social media influencer marketing and social media influencers. In addition, the chapter discusses the factors that determine the effectiveness of social media influencers and social media influencer marketing, such as credibility, informativeness, product match-up, entertainment, and interaction. Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks underlying this study (including the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Social Learning Theory) are explained and the hypothesis for the study are presented.

2.1 Social Media Influencer Marketing

In the past, brands relied on traditional methods to market and promote their products and services, reach their target audience, among other uses; these marketing methods (TV, radio, newspapers etc) though effective, are slowly fading out due to their

high cost, low conversion rate, inefficiency in engaging with audience as well as the rise of technology and social media (Paşcalău & Urziceanu, 2020; Dilipkumar & Veerraju, 2023). With the advent of social media and the growing number of social media users (currently 4.59 billion people estimated to reach 6 billion in 2027), the manner in which brands/organisations communicate and market products and services has changed for the better (Tritama & Tarigan, 2016; Dixon, 2023). For instance, social media allows customers to engage more with brands rather than be passive as with traditional marketing strategies and techniques (Srivastava and Sivaramakrishnan, 2020). According to Gayathri & Anwar (2021), the era of social media is one that has allowed people not just brands to communicate with anyone, at any point in time, without the barrier of distance. As brands can pass their messages more efficiently and effectively and consumers can engage directly with brands on social media, the data generated is more meaningful for marketing teams and brands are able to achieve their goals at an even cost-effective rate (Srivastava and Sivaramakrishnan, 2020). To top it off, social media has also birthed individuals referred to as influencers, who though not celebrities are able to attract and influence many audiences from sharing their lives, opinions and interests on social media platforms (Vronits et al., 2021). Social media influencers are able to promote products and services of brands on social media, promote brand awareness and engagement, promote sales and encourage the interest of consumers in a brand (Geysler, 2022). As brands have become more and more aware of the potential of influencers, the concept of influencer marketing has become more prevalent (Liu, 2021).

According to Bakker (2018), social media influencer marketing is an advertising and marketing strategy where influencers or opinion leaders are identified and integrated into a brand's social media communication. Glucksman (2017) defines it as the process of identifying and engaging with people that initiate and promote customers interactions with a brand. It can also be described as the process of paying people to promote a product or service on social media (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Whether it is integrating influencers, paying them or engaging with them, the underlying concept is that with social media influencer

marketing, the power and influence of these persons (influencers) on social media is leveraged for the benefit of an organisation (Nambakhsh, 2022).

These benefits according to studies include brand, product or service recognition and promotion, brand engagement and loyalty, as well as increased sales (Petrescu et al., 2018; Pina et al., 2019; Delbaere et al., 2021). In other studies, influencer marketing have been identified as instrumental in increasing and improving brand reputation and image, all of which ultimately increases profits and aids in the growth of an organisation (Loureiro & Gomes, 2016; Raji et al., 2020). Saima & Khan (2020) posits that companies can use their own social media platforms to market and promote their products, but it is not as effective as when they use influencers because it could be interpreted by the consumers as mere advertising. Saima & Khan (2020) explains further that because influencers are usually trusted and relied upon by their audience, when companies use them to advertise and market their products or services, it is seen as more organic and real and yields better results and return on investment for the company. In line with this a recent survey carried out revealed that 94% of marketers found influencer marketing campaigns effective, after implementing them and reported that influencer marketing yielded 11 times ROI of traditional advertising (Ahmad, 2018). In a different survey, 39% of marketers revealed that they had plans to increase their budget for influencer marketing, and 19% of marketers intended to spend over \$100,000 per campaign (Digital Information World, 2018). Linqia (2021) reports that when asked 71% of marketers in organisations in 2020 said they would increase their influencer marketing budget for the following year (2021); which according to the author is a substantial increase from their previous year survey where 57% of influencers in 2019 said they would increase their budget in 2020. This growing proportion of influencer marketing budget helps to emphasize the strong foothold that the practice is gaining in the advertising and marketing industry.

2.2 Social Media Influencers (SMIs)

At the core of influencer marketing are social media influencers, without which the concept of influencer marketing cannot stand. SMIs are individuals who have a large and loyal following on one or more social

media platforms and who are capable of affecting the behaviour, lifestyle or even perception of their followers on social media (Abraham et al., 2022). These persons are typically able to exert influence due to the content they create and post on social media for their audience (de Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Abraham et al., 2022). The content is usually specific to a particular area including food, drinks, fashion, beauty, technology, fitness, entertainment etc, may or may not be sponsored and helps to promote a sense of bond or friendship between the influencers and their audience (de Veirman et al., 2017; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Abraham et al., 2022). de Veirman et al. (2017) and Lou & Yuan (2019) refers to SMIs as content creators who in addition to sharing contents about their field of knowledge and expertise, share details of their daily activities and personal lives on social media platforms, which makes them more relatable, accessible, and differentiates them from traditional celebrities. According to de Veirman et al. (2017), SMIs sharing their lives on social media platforms with their audience helps them to strengthen the bond between both parties (influencer and audience/followers) as users are likely to feel an emotional connection with the influencers or feel like they know them personally. These relationships also make them authentic, trusted and reliable sources of information, in line with this, de Veirman et al. (2017) refers to them as trusted tastemakers.

Depending on their number of followers on social media platforms, SMIs can also be categorized into megainfluencers with 1 million or more social media followers, macroinfluencers with 100,000 to 1 million social media followers, microinfluencers with 10,000 to 100,000 social media followers and nanoinfluencers with 10,000 or less followers (Campbell and Farrell 2020; Hudders et al. 2021). The mere description of these categories of influencers may make one assume that megainfluencers with over 1 million followers would yield the best results in terms of effectively influencing consumers' perception of brands and their products as well as customers' purchasing behaviour. This is however not so as number of followers is not often directly proportional to the persuasiveness of an influencer (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2023). Microinfluencers who typically specialise in and are knowledgeable about a niche are instead considered as the most effective in helping brands reach their goals

and target with respect to the above listed (Chan-Olmsted & Kim, 2023).

Studies have argued that while for mega and macro influencers, their large followers reduces their potency in driving engagement, and nano-influencers may not have just enough followers to reach the size of audience a brand seeks, micro-influencers have just the right number of followers (Chen, 2016; Bernazzani, 2018). Their not-so small but not so-large audience allows them to be more intimate with their followers, easily accessible by the followers and build communities where they are perceived as being authentic (Chen, 2016; Bernazzani, 2018). Aside from the issue of large number of followers preventing engagement rate, it is cheaper for organisations to collaborate with micro-influencers than it is to collaborate with macro or mega influencers (Dinesh et al., 2017). Barker (2017) claims that while SMIs with millions of followers can charge up to thousands of dollars per post, micro-influencers would charge way lesser or could opt for various other means of compensation including gifts, being invited to events etc.

These benefits of microinfluencers does not however negate the potential of influencers in other categories. For instance, mega influencers which are also considered celebrities are instrumental for brands looking to capture immense attention and used in large awareness campaigns as they are able to reach millions of audience (Hou, 2018). Nano-influencers on the other though have a small following, are reported to have the highest rate of engagement with their audience (Harshitha et al., 2021). They are also the most cost effective compared to their counterparts, thus allowing companies with limited capital partner with them (Harshitha et al., 2021).

2.3 Factors that affect the Effectiveness of Social Media Influencers and SMI marketing

2.3.1 Influencer Credibility

This refers to how true, unbiased, or believable the recommendations or information shared by an influencer is perceived by his/her audience (Chetty, 2019). Hu et al. (2019) explains that it is the quality of an influencer that determines the level of acceptance of a message by the audience or the level of

persuasiveness of a message. According to Sokolova & Kefi (2020), an influencer will be perceived as credible because the audience or receivers of the message considers the information source (influencer) as having behaviours consistent with their (receivers/audience) value system. The credibility of an influencer is dependent on certain characteristics including expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990; Seiler & Kucza, 2017).

Expertise is the extent to which an influencer is perceived to be able to make true statements usually based off their knowledge, experience or skills in that subject (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Ladhari et al., 2020). According to Lim et al. (2017), for an influencer to be an expert and thus be able to persuade their audience, the influencer must first be perceived by the audience as an expert. This statement highlights the significant role that audience perception plays in influencer marketing and that the expertise of an influencer to a large extent depends on the audience. Lim et al. (2017) opines further that if influencers are not perceived as experts by their audience, it could result in consumers having a negative perception about the influencer, which could then rub off on the brand which the influencer represents, resulting in reduced brand engagement, purchases of brand products or services, etc. Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which an influencer is perceived as honest, believable and is trusted by their audience. Zhang et al. (2020) writes that this is usually dependent on the ability of the SMI to provide honest and reliable information to their audience. When SMIs provide honest and reliable information, the degree of confidence their audience have in them increases, which leads to an increase chance of the audience accepting the message being passed across (Zhang et al., 2020). Further supporting this argument, Ismagilova et al. (2020) writes that when SMIs are perceived as trustworthy, they are more likely to be effective in changing consumers' perceptions and stimulate customers intention to purchase (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Attractiveness on the other hand refers to both physical attractiveness and social attractiveness of an influencer (Delbaere et al., 2021). This social characteristics usually include the creativity, lifestyle, personal traits etc of the influencer (Conde, 2019). SMIs with attractive features are viewed as having desirable qualities and personalities, and tend to be more persuasive and

effective in changing beliefs, resulting in a positive attitude on consumer perception about a product and, consequently, on purchase intention (Chekima et al., 2020).

An influencer who is viewed as credible by his or her audience is more likely to be capable of influencing their audience's behaviour or perception of a brand or product (Wang et al., 2017). AlDarraji et al. (2020) claims that when information is reliable or credible, it becomes convincing and therefore easy to persuade the audience. Furthermore, Lee and Koo (2012) assert that consumers have more trust in their peers (which here refers to influencers) than companies, and are more inclined to use the information provided by their peers to assess products/services prior to reaching decisions about purchases. Other studies has revealed that an influencer's credibility (expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness) has a significant impact on consumers' intentions to buy a recommended product or use a service (Rebelo, 2017; Jimenez-Castillo & Fernandez, 2019; Khan & Saima, 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Hence:

2.3.2 Informativeness

This is the extent to which a SMI may provide sufficient information about the product or service they promote while encouraging their audience to accept that recommendation (Alalwan, 2018). The amount of consumers seeking information online to assess, compare, and possibly purchase things has increased enormously in the last few decades (Dwidienawati et al., 2020). This makes highly informative social media content from influencers (such as facts about the product/service being promoted, the influencer's experience with the product/service, and so on) more efficient and beneficial to customers, as well as easier to influence customer/consumer decisions (Jung et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2014; Wan & Ren, 2017). According to Lee et al. (2014), an influencer who produces information-rich content is more likely to gain or enhance the engagement of their followers, resulting in increased sales, revenue, and brand loyalty. According to Wan and Ren (2017), providing appropriate information to an influencer's audience boosts the audience's trust in the influencer and, as a result, the audience's brand knowledge and purchasing intention. Furthermore Lee and Hong (2016) argues that informativeness is critical

to a brand's sales and profit because people are more likely to acquire a product if they believe the influencer or endorsement is a wealthy source of credible information (Lee and Hong, 2016). Thus,

2.3.3 Product Match-up

The perceived fit between the SMI and the product they advocate is referred to as product match-up (Breves et al., 2019). Product match up can be explained using the Match-up Hypothesis which posits that the effectiveness of an endorsement is influenced by the connection between the endorser and the features of the recommended product (Kamins, 1990). Customers form an image of the product by comparing its characteristics to those of the SMIs, anticipating them to be harmonious (Khan et al., 2019). As a result, when the SMI's characteristics and product qualities complement each other, there is a strong association between the SMI and the product, and the considerable match-up improves the endorsement effectiveness (Gong & Li, 2017). Gong & Li (2017), further adds that a correlation between the product/service being marketed and the influencer generates a positive attitude from the audience, which influences their intention to purchase the product/service because the audience perceives the influencer as knowledgeable about the subject matter and thus trusts the influencer's message about the brand or product/service. In line with this, Osei-Frimpong et al. (2019) write that when there is a perceived fit between the SMI and the product in the eyes of the audience, the credibility and attractiveness of the SMI improves. Similarly, Lim et al. (2017) has confirmed the importance of using influencers that closely resemble the product and are knowledgeable about it.

On the other hand, if there is no match between the SMI and the promoted product, customers may conclude that the SMI is not genuine and is just promoting the product because they are paid to do so (Kumar, 2011). As a consequence, SMIs will be viewed as less credible when they recommend things that do not align with their beliefs (Lee & Koo, 2015). Kapitan & Silvera (2016) further adds that while a lack of product match-up might lead to increased audience skepticism about the product or brand, a match between the product and the influencer can result in a greater acceptance of the source (influencer) and

product or brand, as well as a reduction in skepticism. Thus,

2.3.4 Interactivity

Interactivity, which refers to two-way communication between SMIs and consumers, is another important component in social media influencer marketing (Osayemi, 2019). Given that consumers cannot physically engage with the product being recommended by SMIs in order to evaluate its traits and details, interactivity plays a significant role in influencing users' perceived benefits of the products being recommended (Barreda et al., 2016). According to Thakur et al. (2023), interactivity boosts an audience's engagement in the influencer's content, which raises the audience's confidence in the influencer. This is due to the fact that by interacting with their audience (in terms of quick responses to comments, direct messages, and so on), influencers are able to form a relationship or bond with the audience, the audience becomes aware of the influencer's expertise, knowledge, and skills, there is transparency, and the audience perceives the influencer as trustworthy. And, as previously stated, when consumers/audience perceive an influencer to be trustworthy, the likelihood of them adopting the message being conveyed increases, as does their likelihood of acquiring the product/service or their perception of the brand or product being advertised (Alalwan, 2018). Other studies have also reported that consumers prefer two-way communication (interactivity) over one-way interactions because it provides timely and real-time feedback and fosters a sense of inclusivity and belonging where they feel valued and heard when they receive timely responses and their questions or comments are not ignored (Jiang et al., 2010; Alalwan, 2018).

2.3.5 Entertainment

Entertainment in this context refers to stuff that is entertaining, gratifying, fun, and pleasing to watch (Martins et al., 2019). According to Shavitt et al. (1998), it is content that boosts the consumer's happiness and positivity by giving some type of escape, diversion, enjoyment, etc. According to Morton Rodriguez (2020), entertainment is a vital component in influencer marketing since it makes an influencer's material appealing to his or her audience; and when consumers are drawn, the likelihood of

success of the promotion or marketing effort increases. Khan (2020) and Luo & Yuan (2019) adding to the relevance of entertainment explains that entertainment has a positive influence on consumers' perceptions of a brand and its products or services, as well as their inclination to purchase or patronise a product or brand. According to Audrezet et al. (2018), when an influencer's content or message is entertaining in addition to providing information, it promotes brand memorization, brand awareness, favourable brand image, and brand loyalty. Furthermore, in recent years, entertainment has become a quality or value that consumers/customers anticipate and search for in advertising or marketing. Hence,

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion was proposed by Richard E. Petty and John Cacioppo in the 1984 to explain the attitude formation and change. According to the model, certain factors (human and situational) influence how much tangible effort a person would put into processing and accepting an information. The model proposes two routes for processing information which include the central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). In the central route, individuals change their attitudes by thoroughly processing/scrutinising the message delivered to them and everything linked to the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Susmann et al., 2022). (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Susmann et al., 2022). According to Perloff (2003), the central route involves individuals examining the implications of the message being communicated, relating the information obtained from the message to their current knowledge and values, and only when they are convinced by their examinations do they change their attitude or adopt a new attitude. A classic example of the central route is a consumer/customer acquiring a product based on the product's attributes or the benefits they will receive from the product.

On the other hand, the peripheral route involves less extensive examination and evaluation; instead, people are persuaded by superficial cues/influences such as their likeness or preference for the messenger, their perception of the messenger, and a variety of other positive or negative factors (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984;

Susmann et al., 2022). This indicates that if the individual's impression of the messenger or likeness for the messenger changes, their decision or attitude may alter. A consumer purchasing a product based on his/her perception of an influencer or celebrity is an example of a peripheral route. The current study contends that this model can explain how social media influencer marketing influences consumers' perceptions of energy drinks via any of the pathways (central and peripheral). The model would be a good foundation for explaining how consumers' perceived credibility, authenticity, and so on of social media influencers affects how they view energy drinks and whether or not they buy them. It would also be useful to assess if consumers thoroughly investigate and scrutinise information regarding energy drinks (particularly Monster energy drink) before purchase.

2.4.2 Social Learning Theory

Albert Bandura established the Social Learning Theory in 1963, and it is now utilised to analyse the process of socialisation in a variety of sectors such as advertising, marketing, and communication (Lim et al., 2017). At its foundation, social learning theory proposes that people learn and mimic behaviours by observing and engaging with others in social settings (Bandura, 1977; Nabavi, 2012). People obtain knowledge through observation and interactions, which they subsequently store in memory, allowing them to replicate exactly or almost exactly what they observed after a specific length of time (Bandura, 1977). According to the theory, in addition to imitation and observation, the process of learning new habits may also be accomplished through modelling, which occurs notably when that or the person being seen is on the positive side or involves rewards. Bandura says that individuals can learn whether by observation or modelling when four elements are present: motivation, attention, retention, and reproduction.

Attention: Bandura asserts that in order to learn and copy something or someone, an individual must be attentive, paying close attention to what is being viewed. This also indicates that the person or object being viewed must be engaging and fascinating enough to grab and maintain individuals' attention (Bandura, 1977).

Retention: Individuals must be able to store and remember the knowledge they get via observation in order to learn and imitate. This implies that being observed must be memorable enough to be remembered (Bandura, 1977).

Reproduction: This requires the observer to be able to repeat what they have observed or are currently observing. Reproduction improves with practise, which means that the more a person observes and practises a conduct, the better and more faultless they become at copying it (Bandura, 1977).

Motivation: According to Bandura, people can only reproduce that which they have observed if they are motivated. Without motivation, people would lack the zeal to even be engaged with and reproduce anything (Bandura, 1977).

Several studies have used this theory to explain and predict consumer/customer consumption or purchasing behaviour (Martin & Bush, 2000; Makgosa, 2010; Lim, 2017). According to these studies, consumers adopt their purchasing and consumption habits from members of their social group, such as friends, family, influencers, and so on, rather than through personal experience with the products or services they intend to purchase. According to Makgosa (2010), this is frequently the case when consumers buy new items or use new services.

In this study, this theory will be used to determine whether customers begin to acquire and use Monster energy drink as a result of considering social media influencers as models or as a result of persistent observation of social media influencers who promote the company and its products. The theory will help understand whether the content of social media influencers promoting Monster Energy Drink is engaging enough to capture consumers' attention, and if so, if consumers retain and replicate information from the content, as well as remain motivated to consume Monster Energy Drink.

2.5 Hypothesis

H1: Influencer marketing has a significant effect on consumers' perception of the taste and quality of Monster Energy Drink.

H2: Influencer marketing significantly influences consumers' perception of the benefits and risks associated with Monster Energy Drink.

H3: Influencer marketing significantly impacts consumers' purchasing intentions for Monster Energy Drink.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study. The research methodology specifies the structure of the research as well as the techniques that will be used to conduct the research. The chapter begins with the study's research approach, research philosophy, research design, study population, and sampling technique. These are followed with the determination of the sample size for the study, the instrument used for data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations for the study.

3.1 Research Approach

The research approach is the plan or framework within which a study is carried out, typically covering from broad assumptions through data collection method, instrument of data collection, data analysis, and interpretation (Eyisi, 2016; Taherdoost, 2022). The approach for a research could be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method (involving both quantitative and qualitative) depending on the type of research to be carried out, its objectives, and the research questions to be answered, as well as the method of data collection and analysis (Eyisi, 2016; Taherdoost, 2022). In this study where the aim is to investigate the relationship between two variables (social media influencer marketing and consumer perception of energy drinks), a quantitative research approach will be employed.

Quantitative research is a method of describing a phenomenon through the collection, measurement, and analysis of numerical data utilising statistical tools and methodologies (Xiong, 2022). The use of statistical data in quantitative research saves the researcher time and resources that would have been spent interpreting the findings of the research if a qualitative method had been used. Instead, the researcher can use tools such as the statistical package for social science (SPSS) to correctly analyse and

report study data, making their job easier (Xiong, 2022; Taherdoost, 2022). Quantitative research approach is also able to test hypotheses and examine the relationship between variables, making it ideal for this study as the researcher is interested in understanding the relationship between social media influencer marketing and consumers' perception of the taste, quality, benefits and risks of monster energy drink as well as consumer's purchasing intention of monster energy drink (Xiong, 2022; Taherdoost, 2022).

The quantitative research method also facilitates the generalisation and replication of findings (Eyisi, 2016; Taherdoost, 2022). This is because the findings or conclusions obtained from a small sample in a quantitative study can be generalised to a larger population. The use of established methodologies, as well as objective analysis and presentation of data, that comes with a quantitative approach decreases errors and the possibility of biases or differing interpretations from different researchers. As a result, the findings or research are more reliable, credible, and replicable (Eyisi, 2016; Taherdoost, 2022). Given that the purpose of this study is to fill a gap in the literature on the effect of social media influencer marketing on consumer perception of energy drinks in Nigeria, a quantitative research approach that will allow other researchers to replicate the methods and findings of this study for future research studies was also found suitable.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the ideas and attitudes that underpin a research (Chege & Otieno, 2020). According to Saunders et al. (2019), whether a researcher is conscious of it or not, he or she will make assumptions at every stage of their research, and these assumptions will influence the research questions, aims and objectives, data collection instrument, and how they analyse and interpret their findings. As a result, it is critical that the researcher plan out the assumptions that will drive their research so that all components of the research are consistent (Burrell & Morgan, 2016; Saunders et al., 2019).

Various research philosophies exist including pragmatism, realism, relativism, postmodernism, positivism, and interpretism. This study will however

be based on the positivism. Positivism was chosen as a research philosophy for this study for a number of reasons, including its belief in the concept of identifiable and measurable facts, as well as its belief that knowledge should be objective, free of the influence of the researcher and participant values, and thus bias (Park et al., 2019; Rashid et al., 2019). It was also determined to be appropriate for this study due to its agreement with the generalisation and replicability of research findings (Pillai and Kaushal, 2020). It also relies on quantitative methods for testing and confirming hypotheses and theories, as well as deriving links between dependent variables (Causal factors) and independent variables (outcomes) (Park et al., 2020). All of these characteristics are consistent with the approach that the current study intends to apply and work with, hence positivism was chosen over alternative research philosophies.

3.3 Research Design

A research design is a plan for data collection, measurement, and analysis (Cresswell, 2013; Tight 2016). This means that it gives the researcher specific guidance and procedures to follow for the study. A quantitative research design was used in this study. Under the quantitative research design, a survey was chosen as the best research method for this study.

A survey is a research tool that is used to collect information from a sample of people by providing questions to which they respond (Check & Schutt, 2012). Survey research can be quantitative (e.g., using closed-ended questionnaires), qualitative (e.g., using open-ended questionnaires), or mixed (questionnaires having both open and closed-ended questions) (Ponto, 2015). Questionnaires with closed-ended questions were employed in this study since the data/responses obtained can be measured and it matches with the research topic and aims of this study.

The survey research method can be online, paper, or mail; however, for ease of use and convenience, as well as quick access to data from participants, an online survey was employed for this study (Harlow, 2010). Online surveys have a high response rate and may readily reach a broad sample group, making them an excellent choice for this study (McMaster et al., 2017). With the increased popularity of the internet and the availability of survey platforms such as

Google forms, Zoho survey, survey monkey, and others, researchers can utilise online surveys to conveniently collect responses from respondents. In addition to these advantages, conducting an online survey is less time-consuming and laborious than sourcing emails for email surveys and sending paper questionnaires for paper surveys (McMaster et al., 2017).

3.4 Population

There are two types of populations in research: the population, which is the number of individuals or units that the researcher wishes to understand or for which the study findings will be generalised, and the sample population, which is a subset of the main population (Thacker, 2019; Casteel & Bridier, 2021). The sample population allows the researcher to focus on a smaller group of people than the general population while yet representing all of the features seen in the whole population (Majid, 2018). The sample population for this study comprised of Nigerian people aged 18 to 45 who are active on social media and follow social media influencers of energy drinks, specifically Monster Energy Drink.

3.5 Sampling technique

Sampling is the process of selecting a representative sample or study sample from an interest group (Majid, 2018). The current study used two sampling techniques, including purposive and convenient sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used because it is a technique for selecting respondents who have knowledge, attributes, or experiences that make them knowledgeable about the research topic (Sedgwick, 2013). In the case of the current study, they were people who used social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook and followed energy drink social media influencers (particularly Monster Energy Drink). Purposive sampling entailed looking through a list of followers of energy drink influencers (especially monster energy drink) in Nigeria, selecting them at random, and sending them a request.

Convenience sampling was also used, allowing the researcher to include people who are readily available and accessible to the study, saving time (Golzar, 2023). In this study, convenience sampling comprised distributing the link to the online questionnaire on

several social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp.

3.6 Determination of Sample Size

The sample size formula below was used to calculate the required sample size for this study as seen below. $n = Z^2 (pq)/d^2$ (Iwara, 2021) $Z = 1.96$ (95% confidence level) $n =$ minimum sample size $d = 0.05$ (acceptable margin of error) $p = 50\% = 0.5$ (Proportion of consumers who perceive energy drinks differently as a result of social media influencer marketing).

$q = 1-p = 1-0.5 = 0.5$ (Proportion of consumers who do not perceive energy drinks differently as a result of social media influencer marketing)

Therefore $n = 1.962 \times (0.5 \times 0.5)/0.052$
 $= 384.16$ respondents (approximately 384 respondents)

This value '384.16' is also consistent with published guidelines. The figure is greater than 100, which Hair et al. (2018) believe is appropriate for a study requiring simple regression analysis. It is also greater than the 200 that Memon et al. (2020) advises for Pearson Correlation analysis research. Furthermore, the sample size projected for this study will be sufficient to achieve statistical significance (Andrade, 2020).

3.7 Instrument of Data Collection

In this study, an online self-administered questionnaire was utilised to gather data since it provides for objectivity and decreases the possibility of bias by decreasing the researcher's involvement (Mariel et al., 2021). It was also used because of its cost effectiveness, as well as the lower likelihood of error due to data entry or collation (Li, 2022; Mariel et al., 2021). Furthermore, considering that the study's sample demographic consists of persons who regularly use social media and follow influencers, it is plausible to infer that they are comfortable with the internet and would not have difficulty using an online questionnaire.

The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and was delivered via a link on multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn. The questionnaire begins by informing participants about the study's aims and

objectives, assuring them that no personal information is required, that their responses will be used only for the purpose of this study. Respondents are also informed that their responses will be kept anonymous and confidential, and that they can withdraw from the study at any time. Before answering the remaining questions, respondents were asked to provide informed consent for voluntary participation, as well as attest to the fact that they utilise social media and follow at least one influencer on social media.

3.8 Measurement

All constructs in the questionnaire were adopted from literature with slight modifications to fit the context of this study. Perceived credibility (including expertise, trustworthiness and attractiveness) of influencer was adopted from Ohanian (1990), product match up with influencer, influencer informativeness, and influencer interactivity from Xu and Pratt (2018), Martins et al. (2019) and Xiao et al. (2018) respectively. Entertainment and Value were also adopted from Martins et al. (2019). Perception of Monster energy

drink was adopted from Ahmad et al. (2021) and Qureshi et al. (2012) and purchasing intention was measured with items adapted from Aji et al. (2020) and Belanche et al. (2021).

Overall the questionnaire is divided into four sections (see table 1). These sections address i) participant socio-demographics such as age, gender, and social media platform used ii) participants' perceived credibility (including expertise, attractiveness and trustworthiness), informativeness, product matchup, entertainment and value of social media influencers and SMI marketing; iii) effect of social media influencer marketing on respondents' perceptions of product benefits, risk, quality, and taste; and iv) effect of social media influencer marketing on respondents' purchase intention. Furthermore, all components in this study were evaluated using a seven-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

Table 1: Sections in the Questionnaire

Sections	Definition	References
Socio-demographic information of the respondent	Social and demographic features of respondents	Azhar et al., 2022.
Social Media Influence r and Marketing SMI	Characteristics of social media influencer perceived by consumers such as credibility, informativeness, product match-up etc.	Ohanian, 1990; Liu et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2013; Xiao et al., 2018; Xu and Pratt, 2018; Martins et al., 2019.
Perceived Quality	Consumers' expectations about the quality, benefits, risks, taste of the product (Monster energy drink) when promoted by an influencer.	Ahmad et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2012
Purchase Intention of the respondents	Consumers' purchasing intention of monster energy drink based on influencers' recommendation.	Aji et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021

Constructs	Items	Measurement Items	References
Credibility (CRED)	CRED 1 CRED 2 CRED 3 CRED 4 CRED 5	I feel that the influencer provides reliable and objective opinion about subjects. I feel that the influencer’s marketing is believable I feel that the influencer’s marketing is convincing I feel that the influencer’s marketing is credible I feel that the influencer’s marketing is a good reference for purchasing products	(Ohanian, 1990; Liu et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2013; Martins et al., 2019)
Expertise	EXP 1 EXP 2 EXP 3 EXP 4	The influencer is knowledgeable about monster energy drink The influencer is an expert The influencer is experienced The influencer is skilled	(Ohanian, 1990; Xiao et al., 2018)
Trustworthiness	TRUS 1 TRUS 2 TRUS 3 TRUS 4	The influencer is dependable The influencer is honest The influencer is sincere The influencer is trustworthy	(Ohanian, 1990; Xiao et al., 2018)
Attractiveness	ATT 1 ATT 2 ATT 3 ATT 4	The influencer is attractive The influencer is classy The influencer is beautiful/handsome The influencer is elegant	(Ohanian, 1990)
Informativeness	INF 1 INF 2 INF 3 INF 4	Influencer marketing provides timely information on products and services. Influencer marketing supplies relevant information on products and services Influencer marketing is a good source of information Influencer marketing is a good source of up to date information about products and services	(Liu et al., 2012; Martins et al., 2019)
Product Match-Up	PMU 1 PMU 2 PMU 3 PMU 4	The influencer has a good match-up with monster energy drink The compatibility between the influencer and monster energy drink is high The alignment between the influencer and monster energy drink is high The influencer and monster energy drink have a high fit	(Xu and Pratt, 2018)
Interactivity	INT 1 INT 2 INT 3	It is easy to contact the influencer(s) The influencer is willing to interact with me The influencer interacts with me frequently	(McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Wu & Chang, 2005; Xiao et al., 2018)

Entertaining	ENT 1 ENT 2 ENT 3 ENT 4	Social media influencer marketing is interesting Social media influencer marketing is enjoyable Social media influencer marketing is entertaining Social media influencer marketing is pleasing	(Liu et al., 2012; Martins et al., 2019)
Value	VAL 1 VAL 2 VAL 3	Social media influencer marketing is important Social media influencer marketing is useful Social media influencer marketing is valuable	(Liu et al., 2012; Martins et al., 2019)
Quality	QUA 1 QUA 2 QUA 3 QUA 4	The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as beneficial in terms of alertness The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as beneficial in terms of enhancing energy The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as beneficial in terms of improving mental and physical performance. The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as beneficial in terms of increasing stamina	(Ahmad et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2012)
RISK	RIS 1 RIS 2 RIS 3 RIS 4	The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as not risky in terms of sleep problems The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as not risky in terms of dehydration The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as not risky to the heart The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it as not risky in terms of indigestion	(Ahmad et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2012)
TASTE	TAS 1 TAS 2	The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it to have the best taste The influencer's marketing of monster energy drink made me willing to try it	(Ahmad et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2012)

QUALITY	QUA 1	The influencer’s marketing of monster energy drink made me perceive it to be of high-quality compared to other energy drinks	(Ahmad et al., 2021; Qureshi et al., 2012)
PURCHASING INTENTION	PI1	The promotion of monster energy drink by an influencer made me purchase the product. I intend to buy monster energy drink because it was promoted by an influencer. The marketing/promotion of monster energy drink makes me likely to buy the product. I would contemplate the option of buying monster energy drink. I have a high intention of becoming a customer of monster energy drink because the influencer is associated with the brand. Next time I need an energy drink, I will probably buy monster energy drink. Recommendation of Monster energy drink by the influencer(s) influences my decision of choosing it over other energy drinks.	(Aji et al., 2020; Belanche et al., 2021)
	PI2		
	PI3		
	PI4		
	PI5		
	PI6		
	PI7		

Table 2: Questionnaire Constructs

3.9 Data Analysis

Intrac (2017) defines data analysis as the process of transforming raw data into knowledge that can then be used for decision-making and other operations. According to Ibrahim (2015), it is the process of calculating and evaluating acquired data in order to extract important information. In this study, statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 was used to analyse data collected using questionnaires. To facilitate comprehension and interpretation of the findings of this study, the data is summarised and provided as percentages and frequencies, as well as in tables and graphs. Correlation and regression statistical techniques were also used in this study to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Several ethical guidelines were followed during this investigation, including informed consent, anonymity, voluntary involvement, and confidentiality. Questionnaires were delivered with an information page that clearly outlined the study's aims and objectives, as well as a statement that respondents' replies would be kept anonymous and confidential (Kang & Hwang, 2023). Participants in this study were

not requested to give any personal or identifiable information to preserve their anonymity (Coffelt, 2017). To maintain anonymity in this study, data analysis was also carried out anonymously, as advised by Saunders (2012).

Prior to participation, participants in this study were also informed that they might withdraw from the study at any time, even after submitting their responses (Saunders, 2012; Coffelt, 2017). Furthermore, questions included a consent form for participants, without which they were unable to complete the rest of the questionnaire (Coffelt, 2017; Kang & Hwang, 2023). This was done to guarantee that participation was voluntary and that all participants supplied informed consent.

IV. RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter clearly presents the current study's findings. The chapter presents the findings of the analysis, which were conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, correlation, and regression. The chapter

also shows how each hypothesis was tested and accepted in this investigation.

4.1 Response Rate

Table 3: Respondent rate

Questionnaire Sent out	384
Questionnaire Returned	231
Percentage	60.2%

Source: Field survey 2023

4.2 Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

Demographic data from respondents was analysed using percentages and frequencies. The demographic data constituted the following: gender, age, and frequency of use of social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat and LinkedIn (See Table 2 below).

Table 4: Demography of the respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	70	30.3%
	26-32	135	58.4%
	33-40	22	9.5%
	41-45	4	1.7%
Gender	Female	80	34.6%
	Male	151	65.4%

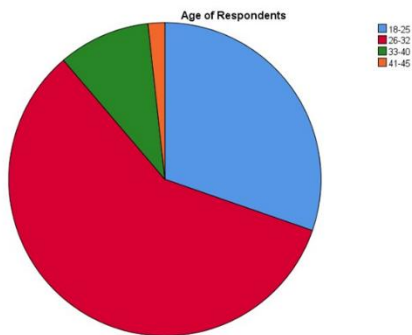


Figure 1 showing Age distribution of participants

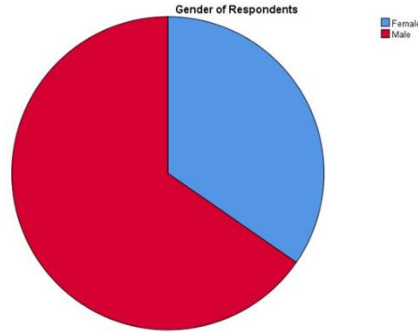


Figure 2 showing Gender of participants

Out of the 231 participants who responded, 135 (58.4%) fell within the age bracket of 26-32 years, 70 (30.3%) were aged 18-25 years, 22 (9.5%) were aged 33-40 and 4 (1.7%) fell into the age group 41-45. Table 2 and figure 2 above also shows that majority of participants were males (65.4%) and the rest participants (34.6%) were females.

		Frequency	Percentage
Facebook	Occasionally	52	22.5%
	Once a month	24	10.4%
	Twice a week	66	28.6%
	Once a week	26	11.3%
	Daily	63	27.3%
Instagram	Occasionally	22	9.5%
	Once a month	8	3.5%
	Twice a week	52	22.5%
	Once a week	37	16.0%
	Daily	112	48.5%
YouTube	Occasionally	19	8.2%
	Once a month	12	5.2%
	Twice a week	65	28.1%

	Once a week	44	19.0%
	Daily	91	39.4%
TikTok	Occasionally	38	16.5%
	Once a month	14	6.1%
	Twice a week	59	25.5%
	Once a week	35	15.2%
	Daily	85	36.8%
Twitter	Occasionally	18	7.8%
	Once a month	10	4.3%
	Twice a week	61	26.4%
	Once a week	39	16.9%
	Daily	103	44.6%
Snapchat	Occasionally	41	17.7%
	Once a month	10	4.3%
	Twice a week	69	29.9%
	Once a week	37	16.0%
	Daily	74	32.0%
LinkedIn	Occasionally	34	14.7%
	Once a month	26	11.3%
	Twice a week	71	30.7%
	Once a week	39	16.9%
	Daily	61	26.4%

In this study, respondents pattern of social media use were also considered as seen above. According to the table, Instagram was the most frequently accessed platform daily, capturing 48.5% of the users, followed closely by Twitter with a 44.6% daily usage rate among respondents, YouTube with 39.4% users, and

TikTok with a notable daily usage rate of 36.8%. Considering these patterns, energy drink brands like Monster Energy Drink seeking to maximise the potential of influencer marketing might find platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok especially beneficial due to their high daily engagement. Social media platforms with the least daily usage rate as seen in the table above include YouTube (39.4%), Snapchat (32%), Facebook (27.3%) and LinkedIn (26.4%).

The table above also shows that participants in this study used various social media platforms occasionally. In this category, Facebook ranked the highest with 52 participants reporting using Facebook occasionally, followed by Snapchat with 41 participants, TikTok with 38 participants, LinkedIn with 34 participants, Instagram with 22 participants, YouTube with 19 participants and the least being Twitter with 19 participants. In addition, participants were also found to have used various social media platforms twice a week, once a week and once a month.

4.3 TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1

H1: Influencer marketing has a significant effect on consumers' perception of the taste and quality of Monster Energy Drink.

Table 5: Correlation between influencer marketing and consumers' perception of quality and taste of energy drinks

		Quality	Taste	Influencer Marketing
Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.714*	.572**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001
	N	231	231	231
Taste	Pearson Correlation	.714**	1	.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
	N	231	231	231

Influencer Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.572**	.721*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	231	231	231
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The first objective of this study was to determine if there is a significant correlation between social media influencer marketing and consumers' perception of the taste and quality of Monster Energy Drink. The table above shows significant positive correlation between influencer marketing and consumers' perception of both the quality ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.001$) and taste ($r = 0.721$, $p < 0.001$) of Monster Energy Drink. This suggests that as influencer marketing efforts increase, consumers' positive perceptions of the drink's quality and taste are also likely to increase. Furthermore, the correlation's significance value is $p = .001$, which is less than the standard significance threshold level of $= 0.05$. Thus, there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis that influencer marketing has a significant effect on consumers' perceptions of Monster Energy Drink's taste and quality.

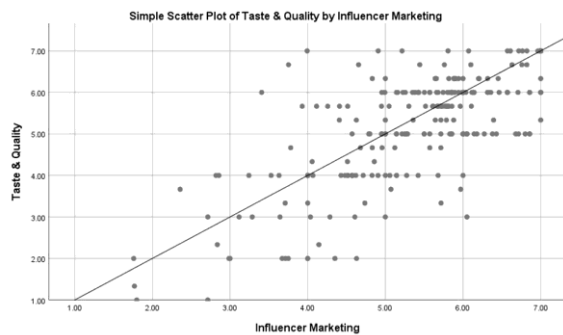


Figure 3 showing relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' perception of taste and quality of energy drinks.

4.3.2 Hypothesis 2

H2: Influencer marketing significantly influences consumers' perception of the benefits and risks associated with Monster Energy Drink.

Table 6: Correlation between influencer marketing and consumers' perception of benefits and risks of energy drinks

		Benefits	Risks	Influencer Marketing
Benefits	Pearson Correlation	1	.708**	.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001
	N	231	231	231
Risks	Pearson Correlation	.708**	1	.681**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001
	N	231	231	231
Influencer Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.765**	.681**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	
	N	231	231	231
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

The second objective examined whether there exists a significant association between social media influencer marketing and consumers' perception of the benefits and risks of Monster Energy Drink. As seen in the table above, there was a significant positive correlation between influencer marketing and consumers' perceptions of both benefits ($r = 0.765$, $p < 0.001$) and risks ($r = 0.681$, $p < 0.001$) of Monster Energy Drink. This implies that as influencer marketing efforts increase, consumers' positive perceptions of the benefits and their perceptions of the risks of monster energy drink decreased. Also, given that the p-value of the correlation is less than 0.001, which is indicative of a highly significant level, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that there is an association between influencer marketing and consumers' perceptions of the benefits and risks associated with Monster Energy Drink was accepted.

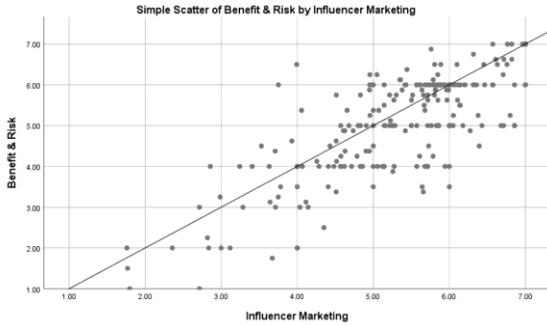


Figure 4 showing relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' perception of benefits and risks of energy drinks.

4.3.3 Hypothesis 3

H3: Influencer marketing significantly impacts consumers' purchasing intentions for Monster Energy Drink.

Table 7: Regression model

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.623 ^a	.389	.386	.86728
a. Predictors: (Constant), Purchasing Intention				

For Hypothesis 3, a regression analysis was conducted to determine the impact of influencer marketing on consumers' purchasing intentions for Monster Energy Drink. The R² value was determined to be 0.389, indicating that influencer marketing accounts for about 38.9% of the variance in purchasing intentions for Monster Energy Drink. The remaining 61.1% of the variance in purchasing intention not related to influencer marketing could be due to a variety of other factors not included in this study. Though other reasons may be responsible for consumers'/customers' purchasing intentions of monster energy drink, this finding demonstrates that influencer marketing has a major impact on purchasing intentions.

Table 8: Regression model analysis of variance test

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	109.489	1	109.489	145.56	<.001 ^b
	Residual	172.248	229	.752		
	Total	281.737	230			

a. Dependent Variable: Influencer Marketing
b. Predictors: (Constant), Purchasing Intention

The regression model's F-value is 145.562, which is quite high. Given that the associated significance level is less than 0.001, which is substantially below the conventional threshold (generally 0.05), the regression model predicts the dependent variable (Purchasing Intention) significantly.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The discussion and interpretation of the study's findings are included in this chapter. The findings will be compared to the current literature, and contributions to the field of social media influencer marketing, particularly in relation to consumers' perceptions of energy drinks, will be highlighted.

5.1 Discussion

The apparent changes in communication and information circulation in modern times are undeniable (Nurhandayani et al., 2019). This considerable shift has been attributed to technological advancements, particularly the widespread adoption of social media platforms (Nunez-Rola & Canayong, 2020). According to a survey conducted by Braatz (2017), there are already over 2 billion active social media users, with growth expected in the future years. Prior to the emergence of technology or social media, marketers and advertisers relied on traditional methods of reaching their target audience (radio, newspaper, television, etc.) (Akayleh, 2021). However, as technology has advanced and social media has become more prevalent, business marketers and advertisers have begun to abandon traditional methods of advertising and marketing in favour of incorporating social media into their marketing and advertising strategies (Radwan et al., 2021; Onyebuchi et al., 2023). Social media has also given birth to a new and distinct type of marketing known as social media influencer marketing, which often entails the use of social media influencers to sell the products and services of brands and organisations (Radwan et al., 2021; Wang & Lee, 2021; Onyebuchi et al., 2023).

Due to the positive results it yields in terms of consumer perception, consumption, and purchase, social media influencer marketing has attracted a lot of attention and is being used in various organisations and brands including Energy drink brand in recent times (Buchanan et al., 2017; Bhartari & Agarwal, 2022). However, there has been little research in Nigeria on the true effectiveness of social media influencer marketing on customer perception and purchase of energy drinks. This study was thus carried out to investigate and fill this gap in the literature.

The current study's demographic data analysis revealed that more than half of the participants (58.4%) were between the ages of 26 and 32. This shows that the majority of study participants were young adults. The demographic data also shows that a substantial number of participants in this study (30.3%) were between the ages of 18 and 25. Other age categories (33-40 and 41-45) had the lowest proportion of participants (9.5% and 1.7%, respectively) in this study. This finding indicates that young adults in Nigeria are the age group most likely to be engaged on social media platforms. This demographic data benefits Monster Energy Drink and other energy drink companies in their marketing efforts in Nigeria. Because young adults are more engaged on social media platforms, Monster Energy Drink and other energy drink businesses can target young adults in their marketing strategies and employ marketing approaches that resonate well with young adults to obtain more successful outcomes. Secondly, marketers of Monster Energy Drink can target young individuals on social media channels where they are most active to yield more positive results. Overall, the findings shown above provide an opportunity for Monster Energy Drink and other energy drink brands to leverage social media influencer marketing appropriately to accomplish marketing outcomes that will increase their market share and profitability. Previous research have also showed that social media use is prevalent among the younger generation, which is consistent with the current study findings (Rawath et al., 2019; Kocabiyik, 2021; Lim et al., 2022). Hruska and Maresova (2020) also back up this claim, revealing in their study that as people get older, their use of social media diminishes.

The demographic data also revealed that 65.4% (151 participants) of the 231 participants in the current study were males, with the remaining 34.6% (80 individuals) being females. This study's data can be read as more males than girls using social media platforms. Previous research in Nigeria have also found that males use social media platforms more than females (Anunobi & Mbagwu, 2009; Ibrahim, 2018; Unachukwu et al., 2022; Ogundele et al., 2023). In line with the findings of this survey, a statista report found that male social media users outnumber female social media users in Nigeria (55.3% vs 44.7%) (Sasu, 2023). In contrast to the findings of this study, Oyeniyi et al. (2021) discovered more female social media users than male social media users in their study.

Furthermore, the findings reflect the survey participants' preferences for various social networking platforms. According to the findings, participants (both male and female) mostly used Instagram, with 48.5% reporting daily use; closely followed by Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, with 44.6%, 39.4%, and 36.8% daily users, respectively. Although participants did not provide specific reasons for using these platforms on a daily basis, it can be inferred that they do so for various unique features of the platforms such as visual appeal and versatility (Instagram and YouTube), timely source of information (Twitter), creativity, engagement and interactivity (TikTok) (Osazee-Odia, 2018; Ogirima et al., 2021; Ekeng, 2023; Hetler, 2023). The present study also revealed that the least used social media platforms among participants were LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Facebook. Similar to this studies, other studies have found that Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter are among the most popular social media platforms in Nigeria (Mbanaso et al. 2015; Olugbanga et al., 2018; Subair et al., 2019). In contrast to this study however which found that Facebook was among the least used social media platforms among participants in Nigeria, earlier studies in Nigeria have found that Facebook and WhatsApp are among the most popular social media platforms among Nigerians (Mbanaso et al. 2015; Akintola et al., 2016; Ngonso et al., 2018; Yahaya et al., 2019). According to these investigations, Nigerians mostly used these platforms (WhatsApp and Facebook) to stay in touch with friends and family (Mbanaso et al., 2015; Akintola et al., 2016; Ngonso & Egielewa, 2018; Yahaya et al., 2019). Nonetheless,

the current findings indicate a new trend in Nigerians' use of social media platforms, especially given that earlier research were done around 4 or 5 years ago. Monster Energy Drink and other energy drink companies looking to explore social media influencer marketing as part of their marketing plans can benefit from this new trend identified in this study.

5.1.1 Social media influencer marketing and consumers' perception of the taste and quality of energy drinks.

This study revealed a significant relationship between social media influencer marketing and consumers' perceptions of the taste and quality of monster energy drink, implying that social media influencer marketing has a positive effect on how consumers perceive the quality and taste of monster energy drink. Using the argument of Gunasti and Ross (2009), this result could be attributed to consumers relying on information from external sources such as influencers to judge or draw their conclusions about the characteristics of monster energy drink rather than making an effort to learn about the characteristics of the company and its products themselves. The elaboration likelihood model also proposes that people do not thoroughly investigate and evaluate a brand or product; rather, their perception of things, people, or entities, or their behaviour, is influenced by peripheral characteristics or attributes. In this study, the peripheral characteristics that may have resulted in the observed positive association are expertise, credibility, attractiveness, product match-up, informativeness, and others. These features would have led to customers believing influencers' opinions and endorsements of Monster energy drink rather than first-hand scrutinising the brand or its products. It is important to point out that while the peripheral route may confer an initial advantage to the company, it does not guarantee that consumers will continue to have a positive perception of the taste and quality of monster energy drink because according to studies the peripheral route to persuasion only results in a temporary change among individuals (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Susmann et al., 2022).

Regardless of the fact that consumers' perceived quality and taste of monster energy may be temporary, as previously stated, it may have other long-term benefits, such as resulting in positive brand image for

monster energy drink (as consumers may begin to associate the company with quality due to their perceived quality and taste of the product). Findings from previous studies have also found that consumers' perceived quality of a brand, its products, or services results in a positive brand image (Li, 2010; Abdullah, 2015; Saleem et al., 2015). Brand loyalty is another long-term impact that consumers' perceptions of the quality and taste of Monster energy drink may have on the company as a whole. According to previous research, when consumers perceive a brand and its products to be of high quality, their satisfaction and trust increase, and all of these factors result in increased brand loyalty (Abdullah, 2015; Saleem et al., 2015; Dewi et al., 2022). While in literature, the majority of attention has been focused on perceived quality, the present study argues that the same may be said for customers' perceived taste. For example, consumers who perceive or endorse monster energy drink as having a high taste may be more satisfied with the product and brand, resulting in some type of connection or loyalty to the company. Overall, these findings and interpretations provide insights for Monster Energy Drink marketing managers, who can use influencer marketing to improve consumer perception of the quality and taste of their products, which will lead to a positive brand image, trust, and ultimately brand loyalty for the company.

5.1.2 Social media influencer marketing and consumers' perception of the risks and benefits of energy drinks.

The current study observed that social media influencer marketing has a positive effect on consumers' perceptions of the risk and benefits of monster energy drink, as evidenced by the significant correlation revealed by inferential statistics between social media influencer marketing and consumers' perceptions of the risk and benefits of monster energy drink. This also demonstrates the effectiveness of influencer marketing in accentuating the benefits of Monster Energy Drink, which include improved mental and physical performance, increased stamina, energy, and alertness, among other things. Influencer marketing was also helpful in assuaging consumers' concerns about the risks of energy drinks (especially monster energy drink), such as dehydration, sleeplessness, and indigestion, resulting in consumers believing monster energy drink was not dangerous.

Applying this result to the elaboration likelihood model's peripheral route, it can also be deduced that participants in this study relied on the expertise, credibility, product match-up, informativeness, and other characteristics of influencers they follow to draw their conclusion about the benefits and risks of Monster energy drink rather than personally thoroughly scrutinised information about the risks and benefits of Monster energy drink. Consumers' perceptions of the benefits and risks of monster energy drinks may also influence their perception of the quality of the brand and its products, which, as previously stated, influences how they perceive the brand's image and reputation, as well as how they trust, patronise, and remain loyal to the brand and its products (monster energy drink) (Liu et al., 2013; Zeng & Durif, 2019; Foster et al., 2022).

5.1.3 Social media influencer marketing and consumers' purchasing intentions of energy drinks.

Finally, regression analysis demonstrated that social media influencer marketing accounted for a sizable portion (38.9%) of customers' purchasing intentions for Monster Energy Drink. Influencer marketing that positively influenced consumers' perceptions of the quality, taste, hazards, and advantages of monster energy drink may have raised their buy intention. In line with this assumption, Wang and Scheinbaum (2018) discovered in their study that consumers' positive attitude towards a brand and its products increases their purchasing intention significantly. Breves et al. (2019) discovered that the more favourable consumers' evaluations of a brand and its products are, the more likely they are to purchase said brand's products. Another study conducted by Wardani et al. (2019) found that social media influencer marketing favourably affected customers' impression of products, resulting in higher purchase intention for the businesses' products. Similarly, Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) discovered a substantial relationship between consumers' perceptions of a product's high quality and superiority and their intention to acquire the products. According to the authors, the higher customers perceived products to be of greater quality and superior to other products, the more likely they were to acquire the product (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In this context, it can be assumed that the greater the influencer marketing caused consumers to perceive

monster energy drink to be of superior quality and taste compared to other energy drinks, as well as to be beneficial and less risky compared to other energy drinks, the more likely they become willing to purchase monster energy drink.

Influencer marketing can also be linked to the characteristics of social media influencers such as attractiveness, expertise, product match-up, informativeness, trustworthiness, and so on. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2014) discovered that when consumers regard their review source(s) to be reliable, their confidence in the product or service grows, which improves their buy intention. According to Rafique (2012) and Jaffari & Hunjra (2017), not only the credibility of SMIs, but also their attractiveness and congruence with the brand or product being reviewed or endorsed, positively impacts consumers' attitude (including purchase intention) towards the brand and its products. Furthermore, a study conducted by Xiao et al. (2018) discovered that the informativeness and expertise of SMIs influence consumers' confidence and trust in them, which subsequently correlates to greater purchase intention.

Furthermore, these findings are consistent with the Social Learning Theory, which holds that people imitate or duplicate specific behaviour after watching and observing others in social settings (Bandura, 1977). In this study, customers' purchasing intentions for monster energy drink may have been influenced by their frequent observation of influencers supporting or reviewing monster energy drink (Attention). By observation, consumers may have learned about the quality and benefits of Monster Energy Drink, which increased their willingness to buy the product and support the brand (Retention and Reproduction). Furthermore, the theory asserts that for consumers to be attentive during their observation of influencers to the point of imitating or wanting to imitate them in the consumption of monster energy drink, the content of the social media influencers must have been engaging (Motivation) (Bandura, 1977).

5.2 Managerial Implications

Using Monster energy drink as a case study, this study explored the effect of social media influencer marketing on customers' perceptions of energy drinks. According to the study's findings, social media

influencer marketing had a beneficial effect on customers' perceptions of monster energy drink's taste, quality, risks, and benefits, as well as their purchase intention of monster energy drink. This effect was aided by social media influencer attributes such as expertise, trustworthiness, credibility, and product matchup, among others. These findings benefit marketing managers at Monster Energy Drink, as well as other energy drink companies and industry professionals interested in incorporating influencer marketing into their marketing plans. Using these findings, marketing managers and industry experts can choose influencers with the right characteristics to market their products on social media platforms, resulting in more effective results in terms of positive consumer perception, increased purchase intention, and increased sales. This means that the influencers chosen should be credible, extremely knowledgeable about the business and its products, interactive, attractive and engaging, and have a strong congruity for the product (energy drinks). These are the traits that the audience notices and decides to believe the influencers' recommendations and reviews to the point of adopting new characters, perceiving monster energy drink as beneficial and of high quality, and deciding to purchase monster energy drink.

As previously stated, customers' perceived quality and taste of monster energy drink has the potential to improve consumers' perception of monster energy drink's brand image, as well as consumers trust and loyalty to the brand. As a result, Monster Energy Drink can improve their social media influencer marketing schemes and strategies in order to achieve benefits such as positive brand image and reputation perception from consumers, consumer loyalty to their brand, which is very important in the highly competitive energy drink industry in Nigeria. High consumer loyalty, in particular, will result in consumers remaining attached to and patronising the brand, which would increase their market share and profitability and should be a benefit desired by marketing managers at Monster Energy Drink.

VI. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTION

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the entire study is concluded by summarising key points and findings of the study. Limitations for the study as well as recommendations for further studies, marketers and industry experts will also be highlighted in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter will cover a reflection from the point of view of the researcher.

6.1 Conclusion

This study was aimed at investigating the impact of social media influencer marketing on consumers' perception of the quantity, taste, benefits and risks of energy drinks with monster energy drink as the focus. The study also aimed to investigate if influencer marketing has any impact on consumers' purchasing intention of monster energy drink.

The study employed a quantitative method, used positivism as its research philosophy, and was supported by two theoretical frameworks (elaboration likelihood model and social learning theory). Online questionnaires divided into four sections were used to collect quantitative data: i) participant socio-demographics ii) participant perceptions of SMIs and SMI marketing iii) The relationship between social media influencer marketing and consumer perceptions of product advantages, risk, quality, and taste; and iv) The relationship between social media influencer marketing and consumer purchase intention.

According to the descriptive statistics, the largest proportion of participants in this study were young adults aged 26-32 years (58.4%), closely followed by individuals aged 18 to 25 (30.3%). There were few participants aged 33 and up, implying that young adults are the demographic most active on social media sites in Nigeria. The data also show that there were more male participants than female participants (65.4% vs 34.6%), implying that males may use social media platforms more than females in Nigeria. Also according to the descriptive statistics, the most used social media networks, in order of decreasing use, are Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok, while the

least-used platforms are LinkedIn, Snapchat, and Facebook.

Regarding the first hypothesis, which sought to test whether influencer marketing had an effect on consumers' perceptions of the quality and taste of monster energy drink, the findings of this study show a significant correlation between influencer marketing and consumers' perceptions of the quality and taste of monster energy drink. This implies that influencer marketing impacts how consumers perceive the quality and taste of Monster energy drink. The study also found that the impact of influencer marketing on customer perception might be attributed to social media influencers' peripheral features such as expertise, entertainment, credibility, attractiveness, product match-up, informativeness, and so on. Influencer marketing was also discovered to have a substantial correlation with customers' perceptions of the benefits and risks of monster energy drinks. This suggests that influencer marketing was effective in emphasising the benefits of Monster Energy Drink, such as improved mental and physical performance, increased stamina, energy, and so on, as well as assuaging consumers' concerns about the risks of energy drinks, such as dehydration, insomnia, indigestion, and so on. Finally, the current study discovered that influencer marketing had a substantial effect on customers' purchasing intentions.

6.2 Limitations

As with any research, there are some limitations that may restrict the study's generalizability and replicability. The limitations experienced by the researcher over the course of this research study will be noted in this part to assist other researchers produce more reliable data in their studies. First, this study used online surveys, which produce self-reported data that may not be as valid because participants are highly inclined to fill out erroneous responses in a rush. Secondly, the current study solely used a quantitative data gathering method (questionnaire), which does not provide as much in-depth data as qualitative data or a mixed study design. For example, the use of a qualitative method such as an interview or focus group would have allowed influencers to provide firsthand reliable and valid information on how they actually market monster energy drink in Nigeria, the factors they consider to ensure consumer engagement, to

influence consumers' perception of the brand and its product, and to influence consumers' purchase intention. These qualitative methodologies might also have been utilised to acquire a more in-depth understanding of how influencer marketing affects consumers' perceptions of monster energy drink as well as their propensity to purchase. These details would have greatly enhanced the richness and robustness of this study.

Third, the sample size and responses (384 and 231 respectively) are quite small in comparison to Nigeria's population. As a result, this data may not have accurately reflected the Nigerian population, limiting the generalizability of the findings of this study. Finally, the questionnaire employed in this study was designed based on earlier research. This means that all constructs used in the questionnaire were those reported in previous studies, and as a result, traits and characteristics not covered by the studies were not included in this study, even if they would have improved the explanation for the relationship between influencer marketing and consumers' perception of Monster energy drink. As previously stated, the inclusion of a qualitative method in addition to the use of a questionnaire would have aided in providing information on the characteristics of influencers that are not described in the literature yet impact consumers' perceptions of energy drinks (especially monster energy drinks).

6.3 Recommendations

Based on these study's findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

- Marketing managers and industry professionals can use social media marketing tactics, such as influencer marketing, to reach out to young adults, who are the demographics most likely to use social media platforms in Nigeria. Similarly, influencers should make an effort in their marketing and promotion activities to ensure that their techniques, including content, are appealing to younger adults. This will increase interaction and provide more effective effects such as good brand perception and increased buy intent.
- Unlike in the past, when WhatsApp and Facebook were reported to be the most popular social media platforms in Nigeria, this study reveals that trends have shifted, with Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and

YouTube being the most popular social media platforms among participants. As a result, marketing managers for Monster Energy Drink and other energy drink manufacturers should target these social media influencers who are active on these platforms in order to reach a more engaged audience and potential consumers/customers of their products and firm.

- It is also critical that, when selecting social media influencers with whom to collaborate, Monster Energy Drink and other energy drink companies collaborate with influencers with characteristics which have been found to appeal to the public and motivate the audience to accept the endorsement and recommendations of influencers. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, product matchup, credibility, trustworthiness, knowledge, attractiveness, interactivity, entertainment, and authenticity.
- Finally, future research should employ qualitative methods in addition to quantitative methods to collect extensive information about the impact of influencer marketing on consumers' perceptions of energy drinks in Nigeria. The employment of both qualitative and quantitative methods would ensure that the data provided is not only statistically measurable but also detailed, ensuring the conclusions' robustness and generalisability.

6.4 Reflection

At the time I began this project, finishing it looked intimidating owing to the amount of time and effort I knew it would require, as well as the hurdles that might arise along the road. However, reflecting back on how I was able to complete the research study and write this dissertation with the support of my supervisor, I feel pleased with myself, particularly because of the information and skills that I gained throughout this time. I learned about social media influencer marketing as well as the intricacies of research, such as research methodologies, philosophies, designs, sample size estimates, constructing a questionnaire for a research project, and data analysis, among other things. It was also interesting to write all of the chapters, which, while time-consuming, helped me to hone my critical thinking, detail-oriented, analytical, and organisational skills.

Looking at the outcomes of this study, I recognise that certain components of this study, such as the research design, may have been done better. If I were to do this study again, I would use a mixed method to acquire a more complete and rich understanding of how influencer marketing affects customers' perceptions of energy drinks in Nigeria. While the quantitative method was effective in answering the study's research questions, a qualitative method such as interviews or focus group discussions would have added more details from the public's or social media influencers' perspectives in Nigeria, making this study more robust and generalizable.

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