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1 Introduction

1.1 Backround an Problem statement

The upsurge of social media usage has permanently changed the way people interact and communicate. In the same way, the advertising and promotion methods of organizations and companies have been changing dramatically in recent years. Instead of directly distributing information through traditional channels, marketers try to interact and connect with consumers on social media, which can make a big difference in consumer buying behavior (Bjurling and Ekstam, 2018). In 1980, consumers were exposed to about 170 advertisement incentives every day, compared to 1,300 in 2017, and marketers are struggling to win consumers' limited attention (Biaudet, 2017).

According to recent reports, the global digital advertising market is valued at $740.3 billion (Naveen Kumar, 2024) According to Powderly (2024), this figure will be increased by 10.7% by the end of 2024. The largest growth period from 2017 to 2024 was in 2021, when spending increased by 31.2% (Powderly, 2024). There is no sign of stopping the growth of digital advertising in the future, and experts predict that this digital advertising market will continue to expand in the coming years.

The digital revolution in communication between companies and consumers has led to the growing importance of peer-to-peer recommendations in the Internet environment, giving rise to the term electronic WOM (eWOM) (Bjurling and Ekstam, 2018). Brand-initiated eWOM supports customer-customer relationships and continues to evolve in marketing to benefit from effective communication tools (Ioannidou Kati, 2017). The most common term for marketing efforts is "influencer marketing." In other words, companies are using social media to reach their target customers and increase brand awareness and brand engagement (Ioannidou Kati, 2017).

Influencer marketing is one of the biggest marketing tools that has become dominant recently and attracts many researchers and experts in the business world (Biaudet, 2017). One of the reasons influencer marketing is so popular is its satisfaction results. Influencer marketing generates 11 times the return on investment of traditional marketing (Woods, 2016).

Nowadays, companies have forgotten about the most important feature of social media: the quality of the relationship between the company and the users, so the control is in the hands of the users.

Influencers have the power to influence the perception of a brand and have the power to decide the success or failure of a new startup. That is why it is not surprising that companies work with social media influencers to promote their products. One of the most important characteristics of a social media influencer is credibility. Reliability, on the other hand, is related to independence.

Interest, effort, and budgets for influencer marketing have grown rapidly in recent years, but for some, it's still new. There aren't enough books and research materials for marketers to follow to implement influencer marketing as part of their overall marketing strategy. Therefore, research and experimentation are needed to understand this topic from a marketer's perspective.

1.2 Research Goals

This study basically has three main research goals (RG):

RG1: Investigate the current state of social media usage in Mongolia and determine the reach of popular platforms and users.

RG2: To determine how influencer marketing strategies used by brands in Mongolia influence consumer behavior and brand perception.

RG3: Identify the key trends in influencer marketing relevant to the Mongolian market and the challenges faced by influencers and brands in this context.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to achieve the main objective of the research mentioned above, the aim is to investigate and analyze how the use of influencer marketing can benefit companies. Therefore, the following research questions (RQ) were formulated.

RQ1: To determine the current state of social media in Mongolia, which platforms are most widely used among different demographic groups?

RQ2: To evaluate the effectiveness of influencer marketing, how do Mongolian consumers respond to social media and influencer advertising compared to traditional advertising?

RQ3: What are the influencer marketing tools, methods and strategies used by companies?

2 Literature Review: Social Media Influencer Marketing in Mongolia

2.1 Social Media Influencer Marketing

Following globalization and advancement in the digital world, marketing through a social media influencer has become very relevant to brands and their consumers. This chapter will explain what social media influencers are and why consumers trust them, different categories of influencers, and how these influencers form relationships and partnerships with sponsors.

2.1.1 Definition of Social Media Influencer

Social media continues to take today's social interactions to another level. In the past, we received news and advertisements through traditional media channels such as newspapers, television, and radio, or through traditional marketing methods and social interactions with a small number of people around us in a specific area. But now, regardless of where we are, we receive real-time international news. We also live in a time where we can find and buy what we want and share or get comments, feedback, and requests on social media. Through this openness, social media influencers have gained momentum in recent years. Freberg et al. (2011) describe social media influencers as third-party endorsers who positively influence consumer perceptions via blog posts, tweets, or articles. These influencers wield their influence across a variety of social media channels, including but not limited to Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and Pinterest. Marketing in Mongolia has shifted from the traditional approach to relying more on social media, as seen in the world and within the country as a market. In the growing digital environment of Mongolia, social media marketing has been especially useful because of the high usage of mobile phones and the growing availability of the Internet, especially in areas such as Ulaanbaatar (Jayasinghe, 2021). The more conventional ways of advertising, which have in practice used television advertisements with Mongolian celebrities and famous personalities, are slowly being supplemented or even replaced by social media advertising. According to Ye et al. (2021), this change is especially significant because it enables companies to target the majority of the Mongolian population that uses Facebook, Instagram, and the WeChat messaging app. This includes more than 60% of the population under 35 years of age (Ye et al., 2021).

The execution of the four-platform strategy that Safko adopts has a distinct flavor in the Mongolian environment. Entertainment materials contain cultural values and current Mongolian life, whereas educational materials contain concerns that are important to the Mongolian citizens in the urban areas. Mongolia is a collectivist country, and therefore the communication techniques used reflect on the community and group discussions (Yesiloglu & Costello, 2020). Additionally, social media collaboration aspects are very well developed. Influencers work with local businesses and traditional institutions to produce content that reflects both modern and traditional values. This integrated approach has proved very effective in Mongolia because word of mouth and recommendations from the members of the society matter a lot. Effective campaigns tend to use micro-influencers who can target specific audiences and relate directly with them; this is a preferred approach by Mongolian consumers whether they are buying local produce or new global brands.

2.1.2 Key Social Media Platforms for Influencer Marketing

Among the sites popular in Mongolia, the most significant is Facebook, as it has 2.5 million users, which is 65% of the whole population of Mongolia (Kemp, 2023). The platform is most utilized in the Mongolian territory within urban settings and is used for communication and sharing of information. Mongolian companies and personalities use the versatile opportunities of Facebook and generate interesting content for the audience based on traditional and contemporary themes. These include the celebration of Mongolian holidays and people's everyday lives. The group feature of the platform has become crucial in Mongolia to build communities based on common interests and discuss products and services in a way consistent with the collective social culture of the country (Digital 2024: Mongolia).

Although X has a presence in Mongolia, however, it is not as popular as other social networking sites (Gaur & Gupta, 2021). In terms of audience, the platform is geared toward urban professionals, journalists, and politically active individuals, so the platform works more as a B2B marketing and professional contact list (Mackin, 2024). While it is not as interactive as social media platforms, it has a real-time component that has made it a valuable source of informing its audience of events as they happen in the Mongolian market and society and discussing these events. The limited characters allowed within the platform have helped the Mongolian users be brief and to the point, which is part of the Mongolian culture.

Instagram has been rapidly evolving in Mongolia and especially among the young urban dwellers. Most importantly, the platform is very visual, which has made it easier to share the beauty of Mongolia today, its culture, and the emergence of modern city life. The Mongolian Instagram personalities are as diverse as their feeds. According to Lee and Kim (2020), the majority use traditional and contemporary components while promoting themselves. It has thus assumed significant importance in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle sectors where the Mongolian middle class is a focus market, and local influencers are able to leverage Instagram features to properly present the products in culturally acceptable ways. Instagram account and localized content is also the use of hashtags and language that is specific to the Mongolian region, which has solved the question of creating a separate Mongolian community to work with influencers.
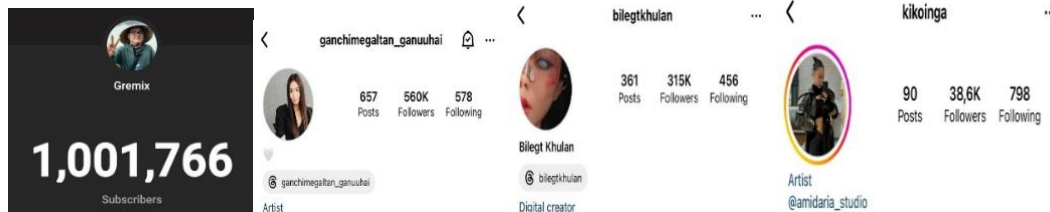
2.2 Influencer Marketing

2.2.1 Who are the influencers?

According to Geyser (2024), influencers are people who promote products or brands and are deemed to be influential in one or more industries. This definition includes celebrities as well as common people who have created a large fan base by posting contents. In a more general definition, an influencer is "an opinion leader, a person familiar with a wide or a larger number of regular recipients, who creates trust, communicates, and interacts with them by posting on the internet through credible actions." Influencers are categorized by their reach, target market, primary topics of influence, and preferred social media platforms:

- Mega influencers (1–5 million followers), for example, Gremix (Youtuber), a popular YouTuber with 1.3 million followers, he first gained a following by posting gaming videos before expanding into lifestyle and entertainment content, making YouTube his main platform.
- Mid-Level Influencers (500000-1 million followers) for example, Ganchimeg (Actor) is actress with over 559,000 followers, she mainly posts about her acting, movies and personal life on Instagram.
- Macro Influencers (100,000-500,000 followers) for example, Bilegtkhulan (Model), with 310,000 followers on Instagram, the model mainly shares fashion and modeling content, often promoting local and international designers.

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- Micro influencers have followers ranging from 10,000 to 100,000, Kiko is a freelance artist with 38,600 followers, she shares digital art and visual content on Instagram, catering to art lovers and other creatives.

Figure 1: Mega-, Mid-Level-, Macro- and Micro Influencer examples

Source: @Gremixbn (2024), [https://www.youtube.com/@GremixBn]

@ganchimegaltan_ganuuhai (2024), [https://www.instagram.com/ganchimegaltan_ganuuhai/]

@bilegtkhulan (2024), [https://www.instagram.com/bilegtkhulan/]

@kikoinga (2024), [https://www.instagram.com/kikoinga/]

2.2.2 Definition of Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing is the use of opinion leaders within social networks with a view to endorsing the companies' brand activities, goods, and services. According to Tuten (2023), influence is "the power to affect people, things, or events," and an influencer is "a third party who significantly contributes to a consumer's decision to choose a brand. However, influencers are not always solely accountable for the decision." Yesiloglu (2020) defines influencer marketing as a subtype of word-of-mouth communication through which firms directly appeal to individuals with the idea that the targeted people will convey information about brands' activities and products. The Word of Mouth Marketing Association has defined influencer marketing as the process in which a marketing professional finds, seeks, and establishes relationships with influential people to support a business objective.

2.2.3 Word-of-Mouth (WOM) and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Word of mouth has been acknowledged as one of the most effective marketing communication techniques since the 1950s and 1960s. It is viewed as more credible than conventional advertising since it directly affects the consumer's decision-making process (Liu et al., 2024). According to

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the study done by Qader (2022), consumers prefer recommending information about products they come across from their friends and relatives as opposed to advertisement. According to Liu et al. (2022), eWOM is 'any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet'. Social media has developed traditional word-of-mouth communication into electronic word-of-mouth. Here, brands engage social influencers to advertise across the different social platforms to achieve laid-down objectives.

2.3   Social Media Usage in Mongolia

The usage of social media platforms in Mongolia has grown to rather high levels as of January 2024. It is evidenced that 2.5 million people are using social networks and 72.0% of the total population of Mongolia, indicating good levels of digital literacy, especially among the urban population. Facebook is the most prominent social media platform with 2.9 million users, which is 88.6% of the population. The site shows that slightly more women use the site, 53.2%, and the site's users are primarily young people, 18-24 years old (Zhang & Wei, 2021). This high Facebook penetration rate means that this social network is critical for influencer marketing in Mongolia. Recently, X has also grown to have over one million users, accounting for 30.3% of the population, and just like Facebook, it has more female users, and its major users are those between the ages of 18 and 24 (Kassa et al., 2018). Mongolia has registered a significant presence in Messenger, standing at 2.6 million (79.3%) of the population. However, it is used most actively by the population of 25-34 years; hence, it is significantly suitable for targeted marketing approaches. These figures indicate that Mongolia is already using digital communication platforms, especially among the youths, thereby creating strong opportunities for influencer marketing that can easily target different groups of people within different segments within the different platforms. Mongolian media consumer behavior drastically changed since 2016, and there was a noticeable move from TV to online content. The television audience has reduced from 100,000 daily viewers to around 90,000, whereby weekday TV-set use has reduced from 250 to 111 minutes and the weekend use has reduced from 364 to 200 minutes. Nevertheless, the traditional TV is still credible with people over the age of 35, especially the news programs. At the same time, the use of social networks has increased beyond imagination, with the average Mongolian spending 4-5 hours per day on social networks, whereas members of Generation Z spend between 7-9 hours a day on social

media (Densmaa, 2021). More people than before over 40 years are active on social media and prefer X more than any other age group. However, what has become most striking is the fact that today, Facebook is the primary source of information for most of the Mongolian population, although there is a clear understanding (70% of respondents) that the information posted on it can be fake.

2.3.1   Influencer Marketing in Mongolia

The influencer marketing sector in Mongolia has demonstrated remarkable effectiveness and growth, as evidenced by the 2019 survey showing 80% of marketers preferring influencer marketing over traditional advertising channels for new product launches. This preference is strongly supported by impressive ROI figures. According to Dunn (2024), influencer marketing generates $11 in revenue for every $1 spent, significantly outperforming traditional online advertising's ratio of $2 in sales per $1 investment. The impact of influencer marketing in Mongolia has transcended purely commercial applications, extending into social and political spheres. Influencers play increasingly important roles in shaping public opinion and social discourse. This broader influence has attracted both established brands and new market entrants to leverage influencer partnerships, leading to a more sophisticated and diverse influencer marketing ecosystem. The sector's success can be attributed to Mongolia's highly connected young population and the cultural tendency to value personal recommendations, making influencer marketing particularly effective in this market where traditional and digital cultures intersect.

2.4   Partnering with and Sponsoring Influencers

Many hold that with the influx of influencer marketing, the tasks of communicating with consumers are now in the hands of social media influencers and not PR agents and journalists. Today, concerns are made to choose the most appropriate one using parameters such as the number of followers, views per day, and number of shares. Influencer partnerships fall into two categories: where the products are offered as the promotional tool and the other known as paid promotions. Sponsorship and some types of collaborations allow for partial branding, whereas paid collaborations grant more content moderation at the cost of identifying affiliations (Zabel, 2023). This is because, for one to be trusted, as well as reach certain regulatory measures, there should be transparency in companies' dealings with influencers. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) (2013) rules, in collaboration

with the Mongolian Authority for Fair Competition and Consumer Protection rules, state that all sponsored content must be clearly and obviously labeled so that it is uncontroversial to determine that the influencer has a relationship with this brand. This approach makes the consumer aware and also assists in sustainably making some influential parameters ethical.

2.4.1   Effective Evaluation of Influencer Marketing in Mongolia

In the middle of the steppes of Mongolia, where even today, people still live a nomadic life, companies are using a great deal of techniques to monitor the impact of influencer marketing. They are using two primary evaluation models, which include discount codes and media's value evaluation. The use of discount codes has emerged as the common approach through which Mongolian firms are using to determine the first touch influence of influencer marketing. This method is most suitable in a country where electronic commerce is on the rise, especially in the cities like Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia. Businesses have their own discount codes generated for every influencer. For instance, a Mongolian cashmere brand can make the code "NOMAD20" in support of an iconic fashion blogger. The influencer then posts this code to their followers, sometimes including it in their content that features the product. For instance, when an influencer shares a video of themselves wearing cashmere deel—a traditional Mongolian costume—they will, in many a post, provide the discount code. Then, consumers use it to buy products, usually through the brand's website or its application. The company also knows how many times each of the codes were used, giving the company direct sales to certain influencers.

2.4.2   Media Value Measurement: Quantifying Influence in the Mongolian Market

While the discount codes give information about the direct sales, the media value measurement gives a wider picture about the influencer. This method is most appropriate in Mongolia, as a growing distinction between traditional and other forms of social media is encountered.

Key Metrics

It involves the overall number of individuals who interacted with a post shared by the influencer. In Mongolia, where there is low population density but social networks are actively used, reach

may be an important factor. Interactions on the side of the influencer, such as likes, comments, shares, and saves on the influencer's posts. Since Mongolian society is relatively populated and compact, the rates of participation with various platforms and applications are generally higher than on an international level. It is the use of comments to assess the audience's acceptance of messages regarding their surrounding environment. This approach is especially relevant in Mongolia, where the difference between cultures can be especially acute and lead to a complete distortion of the message. This involves tracking the frequency of how the brand is associated with the particular content of the influencer posting in question.

Tools and Techniques

Some of the Mongolian companies I know are using social media analytics platforms like Socialbakers or Hootsuite to monitor these metrics on different channels. They also employ custom tracking URLs to evaluate the traffic to websites instead of sales. Certain firms also apply polls in which they ask their followers some questions concerning brand familiarity and shifts in opinion after an influence marketing campaign.

2.5 Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data were also used to supplement the primary data that were collected and to get an overview of influencer marketing across the globe. To include only the relevant sources in the analysis, the data was collected from reputed databases like Google Scholar and Web of Science. An extensive search approach was set by the relevant keywords related to social media, influencer marketing, and other kinds of digital marketing campaigns all over the world and in Mongolia. On this aspect, the secondary data provided the researchers with a theoretical approach to the result of the primary research. Specifically, by placing the local results in the context of the identified global tendencies, theoretical assumptions, and empirical findings on the subject, the secondary data were used. This made it easier to compare and contradict some of the findings seen as results of influencer marketing in Mongolia with those seen in other parts of the world.

The secondary research involved the study of the two successful influencer marketing campaigns conducted in Mongolia. Also the application of the findings and lessons from these to forecast what other types of strategies would be applicable in the Mongolian market. Incorporating primary and secondary data sources enhanced the analysis of the concept of influencer marketing, thereby

providing the study with a basis upon which to offer tangible guidelines to businesses in Mongolia (Mckinsey & Company, 2023). Therefore, by adopting a cross-sectional research design whereby both primary and secondary data collection methods were employed, the current study provides a strong and coherent picture of the given subject area of influencer marketing. The combination of different types of source data and the employment of statistical data analysis methods enhance the credibility of the results, thus contributing to the progress of the topic of digital marketing strategies in Mongolia.

2.5.1   Case Study: Hippocards

Here in the steppes of Mongolia, where nomadic values meet the emergence of a new civilization, a digital transformation of learning has begun. Leading this transformation is Hippocards, a word memorization program that has essentially turned into the epitome of influencer marketing in this particular Central Asian country.

The Birth of Hippocards

Based on the needs of the Mongolian learners in 2019, Hippocards was developed as a new approach to language learning (Current, 2020). With the history of Mongolian script and the Cyrillic alphabet, the requirements for English proficient workers have recently increased due to the effects of globalization and the increasing tourism. The Mongolian group of young company owners identified the potential of using technology to meet this educational requirement when starting Hippocards. They created an application that is situated in a mobile environment and provides individuals with a spaced repetition and game features to assist them in memorizing new terms.

Influencer Marketing Plan

Understanding the close-knit nature of Mongolian society and the growing influence of social media, Hippocards adopted an ambitious influencer marketing strategy. The company worked with all types of influencers, starting with singers and actors and ending with teachers and young employees (Current, 2020). Such a diversity would enable them to cover different layers of Mongolian society. It is intended to coexist with cultural relevance. This way, Mongolian cultural values were promoted, and influencers were asked to base their content on them. For instance,

some influencers compared memorizing words to the more famous Mongolian method of memorizing long epic poems. Additionally, as per the non-spoken influencer marketing rule, the company researched the app's educational credibility. As you will see below, to trust and take the Hippocards app, Mongolian linguists and educators vouched for the app. It also included localized content. For instance, the app and the content created for advertising were adjusted to add Mongolian instances and references, which would be more comprehensible for the locals.

2.5.2   Case Study 2: The 'BG travel' Adventure Tourism Company

A Mongolian company that owns a business called 'BG travel' for promoting adventure tourism in Thailand and Hainan collaborated with Iced Dogs, a friends travel blogger with 40k followers across all platforms.

The collaboration was for the promotion of travel in the Thailand and China during the summer.

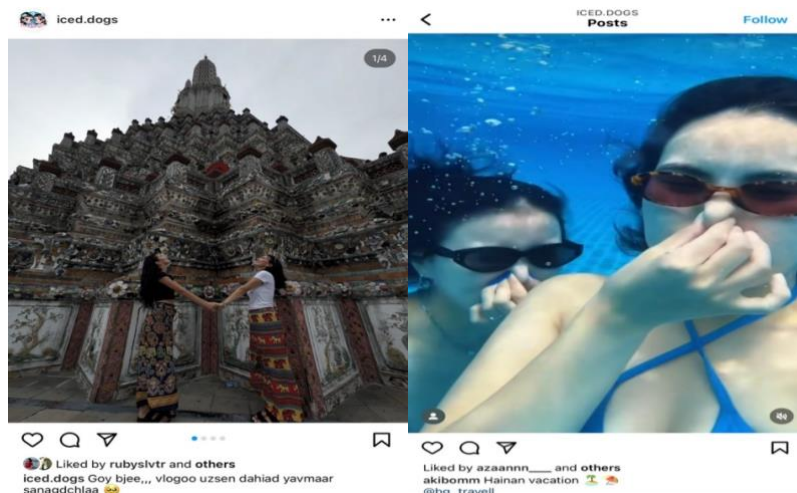**Campaign Details**

- 8 Instagram posts
- 4 YouTube videos
- 16 Instagram stories

Results

Total Reach: 500,000 unique users

Figure 2: Influencers posts made for BG_Travel

Source: @iced.dogs (2024) [https://www.instagram.com/iced.dogs/]

Engagement Rate: 8.5%, which is considerably higher than the industry average of 2%.

Sentiment Analysis: 92% positive comments

Profile Traffic: 15,000 new visitors from Iced Dog's custom URL

Brand Mentions: Triple of the usual rate during the campaign period

Table 1 Comparative Analysis: Discount Codes vs. Media Value Measurement in Mongolia

Aspect	Discount Codes	Media Value Measurement
Best for	E-commerce, direct sales	Brand awareness, long-term impact
Accuracy in sales tracking	High	Low to Moderate
Ability to measure brand impact	Low	High
Complexity of implementation	Low	Moderate to High
Cost	Low	Moderate to High

2.5.3 Impacts

The results of Hippocards' influencer marketing campaign in Mongolia were nothing short of remarkable. Within the first year of its launch, the app attracted over 100,000 users, a significant achievement in a country with a population of just over 3 million. According to Current (2024), ippocards' reach extended far beyond the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, gaining popularity in remote aimags (provinces) and effectively bridging the urban-rural educational divide. This broad adoption attracted the special attention of major Mongolian mining and tourism corporations, which included Hippocards into their employee training programs and considered it a valuable tool to increase the efficiency of the workforce. The success story of this app did not only go viral at the national level, but universities from the neighboring countries were interested in the app. This kind of international recognition was significant not only to prove the efficiency of Hippocards but also to present the tool in a position of the first educational innovation of the region with the help of successful influencer marketing in the context of Mongolia's socio-economical environment.

2.5.4   Long-Term Impact

Hippocards had become one of the most successful educational programs in Mongolia by the year 2024, having brought a great influence in the learning sector of the nation. The app has more than half a million actual users, which is 15% of the total population of Mongolia (Digital 2024: Mongolia, 2024). This made its way into the use in various Mongolian schools and particularly for teaching English, which enhanced its place within the country's education system. Exceeding the educational impact, Hippocards had major economic effects, such as improving English language skills and aiding Mongolia's developing BPO industry, which is highly dependent on English proficiency. Understanding its strength, Hippocards broadened its focus from language acquisition only to include the Mongolian script modules as part of cultural conservation. This combined effect highlights the transformation of Hippocards from being an application that teaches language up to now being a complete learning solution permanently integrated into Mongolia's education, economy, and culture.

Therefore, understanding and following the strategies of Hippocards in Mongolia can be a great learning experience for influencer marketing in emerging markets. First of all, the success story of the app proves that relevancy with localized content and features greatly contributes to increasing the ratios of the users. The selection of multiple influencers also became pivotal for the campaign as it provided the app with broad credibility with segments of users. Virtually this aligns Hippocards with Mongolia's higher educational inclination to show that products of education agenda in a market can quickly gain massive support (Dolles & Söderman, 2014). The mobile-only strategy was especially beneficial in addressing the geographical barriers in the Mongolian environment in targeting the hard-to-reach clients that typical teaching mechanisms cannot reach out to. Moreover, Hippocard's last adaptability, which is best seen in its diversification into cultural conservation with the modules in traditional Mongol script, pinpoints the problem of having to respond to the fluctuations in the market and the new opportunities that might be available there. Combined, these findings provide a framework for best practices for influencer marketing campaigns within emerging markets, with key factors being cultural relevance, inclusion, the educational value of the influencer content, technology integration, and flexibility.

2.6 The Mongolian Context: Cultural and Economic Factors

In order to appreciate the results of the impact and the future prospects of influencer marketing in Mongolia, it is necessary to look at the cultural and business climate of the country.

2.6.1 Cultural Factors

Mongolia's cultural characteristics are a combination of the country's rich history and modernity, which play a huge role in the country's marketing environment. The links to the nomadic past remain as strong as ever, with even increasing trends of urbanization not eliminating its reflection on consumer behavior. The highly collectivist nature of Mongolian society means that word of mouth and the opinions of influential individuals are very powerful drivers in any consumer behavior (Aramand, 2012). At the same time, the country is going through a very fast process of cultural change, as evidenced by more and more people adopting modern global culture and becoming more cosmopolitan, especially in the cities. This special cultural blend of tradition and modernity brings an especially prosperous environment for employing influencer marketing. Since influencers are able to speak both to the traditionalist cultural and consumer audiences and the modernist, they are truly important voices in consumer and product persuasion across traditional and new age markets.

2.6.2 Economic Landscape

The economic environment of Mongolia is comprised of various factors that greatly influence its marketing environment. This is a general concern because the country mainly depends on mineral exports, whose prices are affected by overall consumer spending (Lkhagvasuren, 2020). However, this is mitigated by favorable demography and technology. Increased population growth and urbanization, especially in large cities such as Ulaanbaatar, bring about a more discerning consumer who has higher purchasing power and demand for a wider variety of goods and services. This makes it easier to market products through influencer marketing. There is the enhancement of the economic evolution by the constant enhancement of digital networks, the increased internet connection rates, and the spread of smartphone usage, which has boosted the use of social networks among the population. These factors have come together despite the fact that the economy relies heavily on mining, thus making it very sensitive to economic fluctuations. They have allowed

influencer marketing to grow as more Mongolian consumers get access to and adopt social media platforms, thus providing brands with great opportunities to reach out to their target consumers through the help of the new digital influencers.

2.6.3   Regulatory Environment

In the Mongolian context, the legal environment of influencer marketing principally unfolds in the still very young framework of a limited number of special regulations concerning social media advertisement and influencer activities. This says a lot about the current state of regulations, especially when fanned against you countries such as the United States, whose FTC guidelines or the European Union's stringent disclosure policies illustrate. According to Arbenz (2023), the fact is that there is no special legislation regulating influencer marketing in Mongolia. This has both a relatively free operating environment and ethically questionable issues such as transparency, misleading advertisements, and the protection of consumer rights. At the moment, most influencer marketing actions are governed by the provisions of the Advertising Law of Mongolia, which, although it includes fundamental principles of advertising, does not regulate social media marketing and collaborations.

Although the law regulating influencer marketing in Mongolia is not directly applicable, the Law on Consumer Protection of Mongolia can be viewed as primary because it contains provisions that reflect consumer rights. These are the basic rights of consumers, which include the right to receive accurate information and protection against unfair or misleading marketing (Ryan, 2022). This law demands clear labeling of commercial links and paid advertising while still uncertain on social media influencing. Moreover, practices related to fair competition and policies in electronic communications are usually regulated by two laws. These include the Competition Law of Mongolia and the Law on Electronic Communications. For example, the Competition Law outlaws unfair competition and false advertising, which may include sponsored content, which most influencers do not disclose, or advertorial posts, which many influencers promote. These existing legal frameworks, however, form a somewhat convoluted legal landscape that brands and influencers are left to maneuver through as they carry out influencer marketing campaigns, all in anticipation of the legal precedents or policies that may be forthcoming.

2.6.4 Challenges in the Mongolian Market

Mongolian influencer marketing has its peculiarities that result from demographics and geography, and the influencing landscape has seven specific challenges. As a result, there are substantial limitations set by the relatively small population of 3.1 million for attaining large samples and large coverage, and a highly evident gap in the extent of using technologies (Khan et al., 2021). This is especially the internet, between the urban area, particularly Ulaanbaatar, and rural regions. This is made worse by seasonal climate conditions in Mongolia since these can affect market trends, especially as they relate to internet usage throughout a given year. Furthermore, Mongolian influencers' followership is international, with a considerable part of those in neighboring countries (Nouri, 2018). This makes it difficult to quantify and address the targeted influence on the Mongolian market. These factors raise the need for a proper approach to the strategies applied to influencer marketing that will consider these particular market characteristics together with the need to reach the target consumers within the borders of Mongolia.

2.6.5 Future Trends

Further development of influencer marketing in Mongolia has a high potential for technological progress and further adjustment of the strategy. The application of AI analytics tools will improve the measurement of the campaign results (Tankosić & Dovchin). At the same time, the specific market characteristics that have been identified are leading to the efficient combination of digital and traditional media to develop more effective methods for campaign measurement. Blockchain is recognized as a promising approach to building transparency between influencers and brands, covering partnerships and metrics. Blockchain as an obvious solution to protect both parties from dishonesty. As the market is not very large, the focus is shifting to micro-influencers, who can guarantee to reach higher engagement rates among the target audience. This evolution is most apparent with the improvement in the complexity of ROI measurement, where companies are now using direct sale indicators like the discount codes together with general media value exploration to measure the efficacy of the campaign. This methodological orientation in measurement, which corresponds to the characteristics of the Mongolian market and consumers, can help businesses to better assess their investments in influencer marketing and adjust the strategies in accordance with the local conditions, which will be a major step in the development of the professional level of influencing marketing in Mongolia.

2.7 Challenges and Opportunities in Mongolian Influencer Marketing

2.7.1 Challenges

The Mongolian influencer marketing market has some unique issues to contend with, including the small market size of 3.1 million people. This relatively small population usually limits the size and scope of the influencer campaigns. This diminishes the type of marketing strategy's effectiveness and ROI. The digital divide between urban and rural areas makes it worse, and thus the closure rate of social media also indicates varied social media usage and engagement across the country. This is a breakdown in market penetration, which therefore makes it difficult for influencer marketing efforts to penetrate the rural cohesion, thereby steering the targeted market towards semi-urban areas, making coverage uneven. Furthermore, the transition of influencer marketing in Mongolia also raises questions concerning the questions of actuality as well as measurement problems. Such campaigns come with the increasing concern with the authenticity of influencer affiliations and their campaigns, as well as the overall legitimacy of the industry (Rundin & Colliander, 2021). The inability to measure the effectiveness of the campaign accurately and the inability to precisely quantify the ROI presents other complexities, especially to small brands. These measurement challenges complicate the process through which businesses can justify costs for influencer marketing and further adjust their influencer marketing strategies, which may slow down the development and maturation of the sector in the Mongolian market.

2.7.2 Opportunities

The people of Mongolia are becoming more active on social media, which proclaims great potential for influencer marketing. Due to a relatively high market consolidation, it is possible to create very specific influencer campaigns that would be meaningful to the target audience (Haenlein et al., 2020). This strategic advantage is further magnified by the convenience of Mongolian influencers, who may be able to easily influence other countries within the region, most especially for related cultural communities. In addition, cultural influence is a tremendously innovative source for content creation that allows influencers to create culturally relevant and local content in Mongolia.

2.8   Future Trends in Mongolian Influencer Marketing

The influencer marketing industry in Mongolia is gradually changing course, and there are multiple factors that suggest enormous potential for change. Due to the lower population count, there's a transition to micro-influencers with those audiences, enabling closer and more genuine ties. The increased use of TikTok and other programs indicates that video information has become the key component of the influencer initiatives (Lipsman et al., 2012). Mongolian consumers are becoming more sophisticated and therefore have presented a rise in the demand for authenticity and sincerity by influencers promoting the brands. As the e-commerce industry grows rapidly in Mongolia, it is anticipated that there will be a stronger connection between the influencer content and online purchases, providing consumers with a clear call-to-action and natural buying journey (Lee & Kim 2020). Besides, since measurement instruments are expected to advance over time, it is expected that brands will shift to evidence-based systems in relation to influencer acquisition and performance of influencer campaigns. Thus, this paper has identified and discussed Mongolia's influencer marketing environment as a combination of threats and opportunities. Therefore, influencer marketing poses one of the promising marketing strategies, directions, and approaches for the country that evolves through the digital transformation and topical stages of its economic development. The effectiveness of future campaigns will therefore depend on the brand and influencer's capability to maneuver in the specifics of Mongolia's culture, economy, and technology environment and learn from these to optimally launch meaningful marketing campaigns.

3   Methodology

This chapter offers an account of the method used in the study; the study uses a quantitative research approach to investigate the relationship between social media and influencer marketing in Mongolia. The proposed methodology breakdown can be divided into several fundamental parts. These are study proposals, research subjects, strategy of sample selection, methods of data collection, and analysis of collected data. Thus, the goal of the present work is to reveal mnogot.shape opportunities and challenges, strengths and weaknesses of influencer marketing in the national environment. Moreover, the research also has various objectives. It aims at introducing the new knowledge that can be applied in practice to the critical mass and developing the list of activities that should be taken into consideration by those businesses, showing interest in influencer marketing. In the literature review discussed, the gaps of the research, especially the method of implementation of social media influencer marketing in Mongolia, have been revealed. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by using primary data to provide additional information.

3.1   Research Design

The survey formed the basis of the primary data collection exercise, while the secondary data were mostly from scholarly journals. The questionnaire was developed based on insights from existing literature and secondary data on influencer marketing practices, trends, and challenges. This study uses a quantitative research method, structured questionnaires, to gather insights into the influence of social media influencers on consumer behaviour in Mongolia. The main objective is to study the influence of social media users in Mongolia and evaluate how it influences their perception and purchasing decisions.

3.2   Primary Data Collection

The primary data was collected between 6th March 2024 and 18th March 2024 from 156 Mongolian citizens. The study design used in this research was a structured survey done online using Google Forms so as to capture as many different demographics as possible. In this study, convenience sampling was used to sample the respondents from social media, news, and other social online activity. This sampling method was adopted because it provides a wide cross-section of the social consumers regarding their behaviors and attitudes toward influencer marketing. The survey tool was divided into different sections primarily targeting demographic information, social

media usage, and favorite kinds of influencers, content materials, and views about the effectiveness of influencer marketing on consumers. In this study, data analysis used was the descriptive statistics. For data description, frequency and percentage distribution were used to describe demographic characteristics and social media usage profiles.

3.3 Survey Instrument

The questionnaire consists of ten questions covering the following aspects:

Social Media Platforms Usage: Respondents identify which platforms they use the most (Q1).

Engagement with Influencers: Survey respondents measure how much they follow Mongolian social media influencers and the types of influencers they follow (Q2-3).

Content Consumption: Respondents are selective about how often they view content and ads from influencers and their content preferences (Q4-5).

Influence on Purchasing Behavior: Examines whether influencer content affects respondents' purchase decisions and how influencer advertising compares to traditional advertising (Q6-7).

Perceived Accuracy of Information: Examines opinions about the credibility of information received from advertisements published by influencers (Q8).

Demographic Information: Age and gender data are collected to analyze possible demographic changes in the respondents (Q9-10).
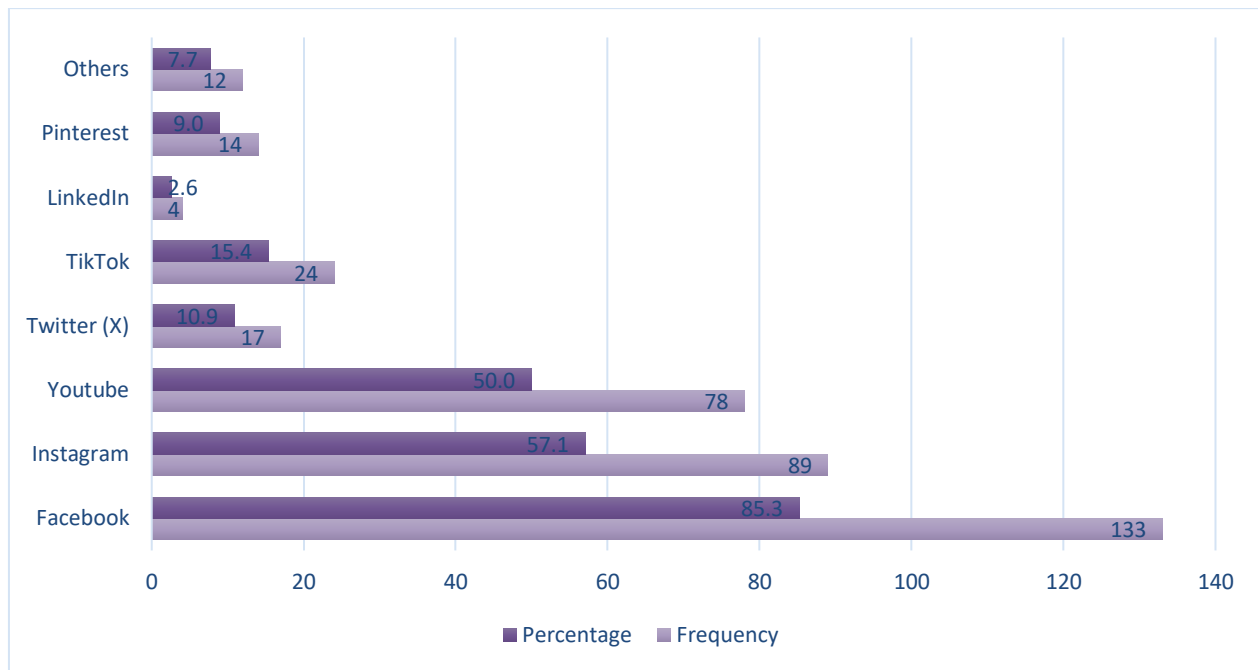
4 Findings and Discussion

4.1 Questionnaire Findings

Table 2: Age and gender data are collected to analyze possible demographic changes in the respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	**18-24**	**49**	**31,4**
	25-34	35	22,4
	35-44	37	23,7
	45+	33	21,2
Gender	Male	45	28,8
	Female	**107**	**68,6**
	Prefer not to say	1	0,6

Source: Own research

A total of 156 people participated in the online survey from users, 68.6% of these people or 107 were women, 28.8% of the 45 participants were male and 0.6% or one person preferred not to say. The age group was divided into 4 groups, and 31.4% of the respondents or 49 people were 18-24 years old, followed by 23.7% or 37 people from the 35-44 age group, while 35 people or 22.4% were 25-34 age group, the number of people aged 45+ accounted for 33 or 21.2% of the total number of people surveyed.

Figure 3: The most used social media platform by respondents

Others	7.7 / 12
Pinterest	9.0 / 14
LinkedIn	2.6 / 4
TikTok	15.4 / 24
Twitter (X)	10.9 / 17
Youtube	50.0 / 78
Instagram	57.1 / 89
Facebook	85.3 / 133

Legend: Percentage, Frequency

Source: Own research

This table shows the distribution of social media platforms most used by respondents. As can be seen, Facebook is the dominant platform, with 85.3% of respondents identifying it as their preferred or most used platform. This high percentage shows that Facebook remains very popular and is the main channel through which to reach most social media users in this demographic.

Following and using Instagram (57.1%) and YouTube (50.0%) shows their importance. These platforms are more likely to be valuable for their visual content and important for influencer marketing, especially among consumers who prefer image and video-based content.

Other platforms such as Twitter (X), TikTok, Pinterest, and LinkedIn have relatively low usage rates at less than 16% of respondents. LinkedIn is the least used platform at only 2.6%, which may be due to its professional focus and less relevance to overall social media engagement than other platforms.

This data highlights Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as the primary social media platforms to focus on for influencer marketing initiatives targeting this demographic, given their higher user engagement.

Table 3: Whether respondents follow Mongolian social media influencers

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	86	55,1
No	68	43,6

Source: Own research

55.1% of respondents said they follow Mongolian influencers, while 43.6% said they don't. This suggests that influencers' content is moderately engaging, and that while there are significant users who follow influencers, a significant portion of respondents are inactive.

Table 4:Influencer category most followed by respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Youtubers, TikTokers, Fashion Bloggers, etc.	64	41,0
Celebrities (singers, actors, athletes, etc.)	**77**	**49,4**
Professionals (entrepreneurs, doctors, etc.)	57	36,5
Others;	28	17,9

Source: Own research

For respondents, Celebrities (singers, actors, athletes, etc.) are the most popular type of influencer, with 49.4% of respondents following them on social media. Youtubers, TikTokers, Fashion Bloggers, etc. are also widely followed, and 41.0% of the respondents expressed interest in following these influencers on social media. This is largely due to the high prevalence of lifestyle and travel content, particularly in visual and video-based formats. 36.5% of respondents followed professionals (entrepreneurs, doctors, etc.), indicating a strong interest in content focused on expertise and professional insight. Additionally, 17.9% of respondents reported following influencers outside of the main categories listed, indicating some diversity in influencer preferences.

According to research, celebrities and lifestyle influencers are the most popular among Mongolian consumers. For brands and marketers targeting the Mongolian market, this research highlights the effectiveness of working with celebrities and lifestyle influencers, while also showing a relatively large audience segment receptive to professional and specialized content.

Table 5: Frequency of respondents viewing influencers' content and advertising

	Frequency	**Percentage**
Usually	30	19,2
Sometimes	93	59,6
Rarely	25	16,0
Never	5	3,2

Source: Own research

A look at Table 5 shows how much respondents engage with social media influencers' content and promotions. Most, 59.6%, view influencers' content "sometimes," indicating a moderate level of interaction. 19.2% of respondents "often" view such content, indicating a small but significant group with regular engagement. Meanwhile, 16.0% said they "rarely" view influencer content, while only 3.2% said they "never." This distribution shows that the majority of the respondents are exposed to some degree of affective content.

Table 6: The type of content respondents like most and the content they want to see more of in the future

	Frequency	Percentage
News and Information	77	49,4
Live stream	36	23,1
Podcast	26	16,7
Vlogs	39	25,0
Blog Post	23	14,7
Videos	11	7,1
Others	10	6,4

Source: Own research

Table 6 provides insight into the types of content respondents are most interested in and would like to see more of. News and informational content is the most popular, with 49.4% of respondents expressing interest, indicating a strong demand for informational content from influencers. Vlogs also hold notable interest, with 25.0% of respondents, reflecting a preference for personalized, day-in-life style content. Live streaming (23.1%) and podcasts (16.7%) are also relatively popular, reflecting increased interest in interactive and audio content formats. Also, traditional content formats such as blog posts (14.7%) and videos (7.1%) are less attractive among this group, with only a lower percentage of respondents preferring them.

According to the survey, most respondents prefer informative and interactive formats. In particular, it can be seen that they are more interested in news, information, vlogs, live streams, and podcasts. This suggests that influencers who offer informative, real-time or immersive content will be more effectively popular with this audience. The author believes that companies and brands looking to work with influencers in Mongolia can attract more users by focusing on these types of content to increase engagement with their target demographic.

Figure 4: Whether influencers and influencer content influence respondents' purchasing decisions
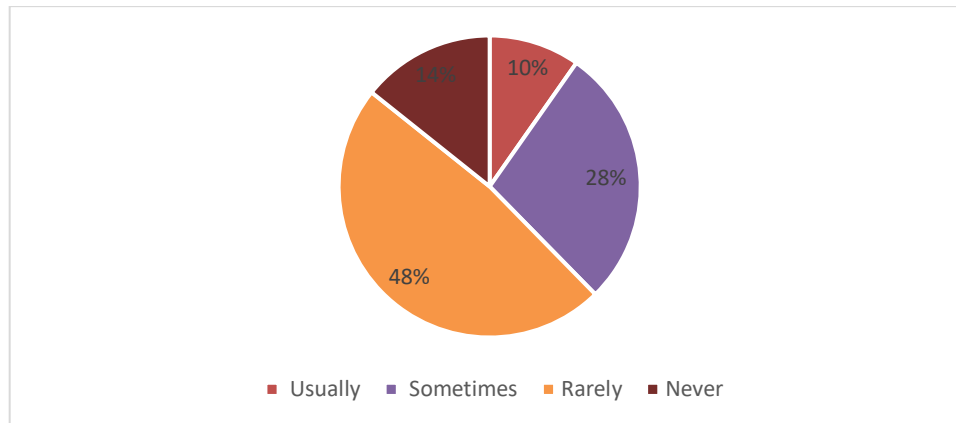
From the data in Figure 4, the influence of influencers on the purchasing decisions of the respondents is generally low to medium. 9.6% of respondents said that influencer content "often" influences their purchase decisions, while a larger portion, 27.6%, said it "sometimes." However, the majority of respondents said they were "rarely" (47.4%) or "never" exposed (14.1%). This suggests that while influencer content has some influence on purchase behavior, it is not a dominant factor for most respondents.

Table 7: Whether influencer advertising articles, content, or reviews are more accessible and persuasive than traditional media advertising

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	86	55,1
No	68	43,6

In Table 7, when asked whether influencer advertising content is more accessible and persuasive than traditional media advertising, the majority, 55.1%, answered "yes," indicating that influencer content is easier to access and more persuasive than traditional media advertising. On the other hand, 43.6% of respondents felt that influencer content is more accessible and persuasive than traditional media advertising. This shows a slight preference for influencer content, but not an overwhelming consensus of divided opinion.

Influencer content has a limited but significant impact on purchase decisions, with most respondents selecting it as having only an occasional influence. While some believe that influencer advertising is more accessible and persuasive than traditional media, there is a significant portion that disagrees. This suggests that while influencers may be effective in generating opinion and generating interest, traditional media is still valuable in many areas. Brands can post informational articles, blog posts or video content on their website to provide informational value to consumers. Influencers can then be invited to share their insights and perspectives on the topic, which can be incorporated into the content.

Table 8: Whether respondents receive accurate and relevant information from social media advertising

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	119	76,3
No	34	21,8

Source: Own research

Table 8 shows the accuracy and relevance of information received from social media advertising. The majority (76.3%) of respondents believed that social media advertising provides accurate and relevant information. This suggests that for most respondents, social media advertising is a reliable source of content that is relevant to their needs and interests. But 21.8% of respondents said they don't receive accurate and relevant information from social media ads, indicating a minority questioning influencer content or the credibility of ads on these platforms.

The author sees the fact that the majority of respondents found social media advertising to be accurate and relevant, which is a positive sign for brands and influencers looking to build trust through digital platforms. But with nearly a quarter of respondents questioning the veracity of this content, brands can increase credibility by providing influencers with clear, honest information and transparency about partnerships. This approach can help address the concerns of people who are skeptical of information they encounter on social media.

4.2   Limitations for future research

However, this study has limitations, and they are as follows, though this study was useful in generating knowledge about influencer marketing in Mongolia. Although the sample group constituted 156 persons and was therefore diverse, the study sample may not be a true reflection of the whole Mongolian population. For future research, a larger sample size should be included, and perhaps the participants from rural areas, who might have different concerns concerning the social network usage. Further, there was also a lack of longitudinal studies as to how the efficiency of influencer marketing in Mongolia changes in a dynamic environment over time. Therefore, studying influencer marketing in the Mongolian context shows that the country presents a strong opportunity for influencer marketing with high levels of social media interaction and positive relationships between influencer posts and consumer behavior. Of course, the specificity of the culture and a relatively small market at that also have their advantages and disadvantages. From these insights, businesses can tap into influencer marketing to reach out to Mongolian consumers in the right way.

5 Conclusion

The rise of influencer marketing, which combines traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) strategies with digital innovation, is a powerful approach for companies and brands looking to engage consumers. As consumers turn away from traditional advertising, influencer peer-to-peer recommendations gain traction, and social media platforms play key roles in connecting brands with their target audiences. To build relationships with their customers through social media, companies have begun to find and partner with a growing number of influencers (online celebrities) who share their content on social media channels and build a following for themselves. These vary from everyday life to specific interests.

Despite the growing popularity of influencer marketing, many companies are still learning how to implement it effectively. This study aims to contribute to the theoretical and practical guide to influencer marketing potential.

The research consists of three main parts. An attempt has been made to present an overview of the Literature Review to identify the primary needs, emergence, and existing knowledge of influencer marketing from academic sources. Secondary data research aims to illustrate various case studies and trends in influencer marketing in Mongolia. Case studies of specific companies, BG_Travel and Hippocards, are also included. Finally, primary questionnaire data from ordinary users were collected to fill in the missing knowledge in the previous sections. The basic needs for implementing influencer marketing activities are presented in the literature review section. The development of social media has changed the way people communicate and because of the overabundance of advertising by companies, consumers have started to look to peer-to-peer and real-world reviews rather than traditional advertising when making purchasing decisions. Along with this change in communication came the development of social media channels, a new group of people identified as influencers. After that, companies and brands started looking for opportunities to work with influencers to create new and effective connections with their consumers. Since then, the practice of influencer marketing, representing companies and brands that interact with influencers, has continued to improve.

Key trends identified by the research include the growing influence of micro-influencers, the popularity of Instagram influencer marketing, the success of long-term partnerships, and the importance of using trusted influencers to create high-quality content. Micro-influencers offer cost-

effective solutions while achieving high engagement and significant results with targeted followers. Long-term partnerships with influencers help brands build loyalty and build customer loyalty, while skillful and creative content development plays a key role in a successful campaign.

The effectiveness of influencer marketing is well supported by academic and primary research. The survey found that 9.7% of respondents were influenced by influencer purchase recommendations for products and services, and 76% of respondents said influencer content had a moderate to high influence on their purchasing decisions. This shows that a significant number of respondents are willing to make a purchase based on influencer endorsements, and it can be seen that influencer marketing can significantly increase brand success.

Lastly, research confirms that influencer marketing is an effective and growing strategy, and that companies can benefit from incorporating it into their core marketing efforts. Influencer marketing is one of the most profitable ways, especially in industries such as fashion, cosmetics, and food service. By focusing on strategic partnerships with influencers, embracing new content formats, and understanding the context of culture and technology, brands can improve engagement and build long-term relationships with consumers.

Lastly, the author concludes that the main objectives of the study have been successfully met and the research questions have been answered. The author believes that this study can contribute to the knowledge gap in influencer marketing. In addition, this study identifies the key steps, current trends, and successful strategies for implementing influencer marketing campaigns, and it is believed that it can provide valuable recommendations on this topic.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Appendix B: Questionaire (English)

"Social media and influencers in Mongolia"

Thank you for participating in my research on social media and influencers in Mongolia. The purpose of this survey is to collect information related to the thesis I am writing about. This survey will take 2-3 minutes to complete.

1. What social media do you use regularly?
   - ☐ Facebook
   - ☐ Instagram
   - ☐ Youtube
   - ☐ Twitter
   - ☐ TikTok
   - ☐ LinkedIn
   - ☐ Pinterest
   - ☐ Others;

2. Do you follow Mongolian social media influencers?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

3. Which category of influencers do you follow most on your social media accounts?
   - ☐ Youtubers, TikTokers, Fashion Bloggers, etc.
   - ☐ Celebrities (singer, actor, athlete, etc.)
   - ☐ Professionals (entrepreneurs, doctors, etc.)
   - ☐ Others;

4. How often do you view content and advertising from social media influencers?
   - ☐ Usually
   - ☐ Sometimes
   - ☐ Rarely
   - ☐ Never

5. What kind of content do you like and what kind of content do you want to see more of in the future?

- ☐ News and Information
- ☐ Live stream
- ☐ Podcast
- ☐ Vlogs
- ☐ Blog Post
- ☐ Videos
- ☐ Others

6. When you shop (online shop), do influencers, content from influencers, or advertising influence your purchasing decisions?
- ☐ Usually
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

7. Are social media and influencer advertising posts, content, and reviews more accessible and persuasive than traditional media advertising?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Are you getting accurate and relevant information from social media advertising?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9. Age
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45+

10. Gender
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

DECLARATION

on authenticity and public assess of thesis[1]

Student's name: Anudari Batzorig

Student's Neptun ID: V3Z4MY

Title of the document: Social Media and Influencer Marketing in Mongolia

Year of publication: 2024

Department: Business administration and Management

I declare that the submitted thesis[2] is my own, original individual creation. Any parts taken from an another author's work are clearly marked, and listed in the table of contents.
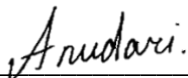
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