

National College of Ireland

Project Submission Sheet

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Programme: Master of Science in Management **Year:** 1

Module: ...Dissertation.....

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Submission

Due Date:15.8.2025.....

Project Title: Factors influencing Millennials' Perception of Trust and Loyalty
Towards Facebook and Instagram Influencers in Myanmar

Word Count:10057.....

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	Title Page
	<i>(Full title, your name, student number, programme, department, date)</i>
	Abstract
	<i>(~250 words summary of aims, methods, findings, and implications)</i>
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	Table of Contents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of Tables • List of Figures • List of Abbreviations (<i>if applicable</i>) <hr/>

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- 1.2 Research Problem and Rationale
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- 1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

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6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire
Appendix B: Ethical Approval Documents
Appendix C: Additional Tables and Figures

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**Factors influencing Millennials' Perception of Trust
and Loyalty Towards Facebook and Instagram
Influencers in Myanmar**

May Thu Htet

23308460

Master of Science in Management

National College of Ireland

“Submitted to the National College of Ireland, August 2025”.

Abstract

Social Media Marketing has become an emerging trend all over the world, as well as in a small country, Myanmar, which is one of the Asian Countries. This study investigates the factors that shape Millennials' trust and loyalty towards Facebook and Instagram Influencers in Myanmar. Through a quantitative research design including a set of questionnaires, data were collected from 219 respondents. It examines how influencer characteristics, platform type, influencer rank, and sponsored content impact purchasing behaviour and long-term brand loyalty. Statistical analyses, including one-way ANOVA and logistic regression, indicate that posting frequency and attractiveness are consistent predictors of loyalty. However, authenticity, expertise, and transparency were not significant in the Myanmar context. The findings also discovered that influencers from the beauty and fashion industry generate stronger loyalty than influencers from the food industry. This study provides some valuable insights and practical guidance for marketers and influencers focusing on connecting with millennial audiences and contributes to the developing literature on influencer marketing in emerging economies.

Keywords: influencer marketing, millennials, social media, trust, and loyalty

Declaration

I hereby certify that this dissertation titled:

“Factors influencing Millennials’ Perception of Trust and Loyalty Towards Facebook and Instagram Influencers in Myanmar”.

is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

All sources of information have been acknowledged and referenced in the Reference section.



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National College of Ireland
15.8.2025

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Introduction

Nowadays, people use digital platforms, which play an essential part in their daily lives, reshaping how people communicate, exchange information, and build social connections (Hani et al, 2024). Moreover, people get bored by traditional advertisements, and they are attracted by social media advertisements such as reels and blogs, as it is very popular along with the popularity of social media platforms. So, the advertisers have changed their strategies to promote the products and services. They found a less expensive but more effective marketing strategy, which is referred to as influencer marketing. It means that they sponsor an influencer to advertise products or services naturally and interestingly, which is more like telling a story.

Indeed, influencer marketing is more powerful than traditional marketing, and it can enhance brand awareness and gain customers' trust and loyalty. Nurlatifah, Ariyanti, and Iskamto (2023) mentioned that social media includes five areas such as informativeness, interaction, trendiness, personalization, and word-of-mouth (electronic). In terms of informativeness, it refers to how much consumers trust the content to provide accurate, supportive, and complete product information, such as features, reviews, or ratings. Interactions outlines the role of social media as a space for user engagement and argument about brands. Trendiness highlights the social media channel's ability to produce current and trending product-related content and keep users updated. Personalization reflects the well-organized adaptation of a product or service according to individual preferences, applying consumer data to foster satisfaction. Last but not least, e-word of mouth reflects consumers sharing their product experience online, such as giving reviews, and affecting others through digital peer-to-peer recommendations.

In addition, influencer marketing has become an essential tool for marketers to convey their promotional messages to the audience. Thus, there is a question to explore, which is about the factors driving social media influencers to gain trust and loyalty from their audience, especially millennials. The research will target millennials who were born between 1981 and 1996, since they grew up during the rise of social media, so they can be considered the key audience of social media.

In terms of social media, the study will focus on Facebook and Instagram because both platforms have billions of active users worldwide, and it is very popular among millennials.

Despite the development of influencer marketing over the years, there is a gap in understanding its specific areas, such as trust and loyalty towards the targeted generation, the Millennials, within the Myanmar context. While existing studies and research have examined and explored the impact of factors influencing consumers' perception of trust or loyalty towards social media platforms, these findings may not fully analyze the Myanmar market, where social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have been widely used over the years.

On top of that, the main purpose of this research is to analyse how Millennials in Myanmar generate trust and loyalty towards social media influencers and how these factors impact their purchasing decision and brand loyalty. Moreover, this study also aims to examine how different influencer characteristics, such as authenticity, expertise, and types and specific platform choices like Facebook vs Instagram, influence consumer perceptions.

Research Questions and Objectives

So, according to the literature review analysis, the main research question to address is “What factors influence millennials' perception of trust and loyalty towards Facebook and Instagram influencers in Myanmar?” Moreover, specifically, the study focuses on four objectives as below.

Objective 1

To identify which specific characteristics of influencers, such as authenticity, expertise, follower count, or posting frequency, most influence millennials' trust on Facebook and Instagram.

Objective 2

To examine how millennials value trust and loyalty towards influencers and influencer-promoted brands across Facebook and Instagram social media platforms.

Objective 3

To analyze how influencer rank, such as nano, micro, macro, or celebrity influencers, impacts millennials' purchasing decisions and long-term brand loyalty, especially within the beauty and fashion industries.

Objective 4

To discover millennials' behavioral responses towards various types of sponsored content, such as video reviews, posts, or stories by influencers in Myanmar.

By focusing on the Myanmar market, this research involves deep and valuable insights into the vital role of influencer marketing in fast-growing digital platforms. It analyses the factors that affect the efficacy of influencer endorsements, including trust, perceived authenticity, expertise, attractiveness, and how these factors portray the brand perceptions and purchase decision by millennial consumers.

Literature Review

Introduction to Literature Review

This chapter critically analyzes and reviews the existing research on influencer social media marketing with a particular focus on factors influencing millennials' trust and loyalty towards influencers on Facebook and Instagram. The purpose of this review is to integrate key theories, critically examine relevant studies, and identify research gaps in current knowledge to provide a strong academic foundation for this dissertation. In terms of the guiding concept, it is to discover how various characteristics of influencers, such as expertise, follower count, authenticity, and frequency of posting, portray millennials' trust and loyalty behavior, and how these perceptions vary across social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

At the beginning of this chapter, relevant theoretical frameworks, including trust theory, loyalty theory, and influencer marketing models, are presented. Then, it comes up with an overview of influencer marketing, which is followed by a particular consideration of factors influencing trust towards influencers. Further discovery includes trust and loyalty towards brands, the impact of influencer rank on consumer behavior, and consumers' responses to sponsored content. Last but not least, this review identifies gaps in existing peer-reviewed journals and concludes with a summary featuring the relevance to this research.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Trust Theory

Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395) define trust as a psychological condition of an individual's acceptance of vulnerability based on positive expectations of another party's behavior or intentions. So, in the influencer marketing context, trust theory explains how consumers' perceptions of an influencer's expertise and authenticity portray their trust towards the influencer and the brand they support.

Moreover, Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025) focus on the source credibility model, which was originally developed for celebrities to analyze influencers, particularly on Instagram. That model targets factors such as attractiveness, expertise, and credibility. In terms of consumer attitudes, there are advertising trust and image satisfaction, which further positively impact consumers' purchasing intention. However, this focuses on the attitudes of Generation Z toward Instagram influencers in the fashion industry. Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025) claimed that source credibility is defined as how much the audience sees the source as well-informed and brilliant about a product or service. When reviews on Instagram are seen as trustworthy, customers develop positive attitudes towards the recommended brands by influencers. So, people make judgments of the credibility of an Instagram post based on their perception of the influencers and factors like relevance and timing. According to the research, the source credibility model is considered an important one.

1.2. Loyalty Theory

Ngobo (2017) tested Dick and Basu's loyalty framework and analyzed customer loyalty. Ngobo (2017) claimed that customer loyalty is linked with profitability since most of the loyal customers are likely to buy the product or service again, so that they keep up the brand position in the market as well as expand to premium versions.

Dick and Basu (1994) claimed that there are three types of loyalty conditions of the customers based on their attitudes and behaviors. They are true loyalty condition, which is a high attitude of repetitive purchasing, no loyalty conditions, and the latent loyalty condition. The Customers segment, which is categorized as a true loyalty condition, can be considered the most valuable one since they tend to give 90% of their commitment to a single brand. This type of loyalty is influenced by older customers since they have their firm habits and dislike taking a risk of choosing alternative service providers. And the latent loyalty version influenced mainly by young customers tends to be a temporary condition. Finally, the no loyalty condition was dominated by working females since they prefer to choose the most convenient brand for them.

However, Ngobo (2017) also mentioned that loyalty purposes change over time since they are just a function of perceived value at prior stages, and then over time they are more impacted by sentimental attitudes toward the brand. According to Ngobo (2017), the findings prove that customer loyalty decreased depending on the trend. In addition, the truly loyal customers tend to be price sensitive, so that promotions have short-term and long-term impact on customers who are in the conditions of no loyalty and latent loyalty.

In the context of influencer marketing literature, Consumer Brand Engagement performs a vital role in brand loyalty and purchasing behaviors (Fajarwati and Haliza, 2024). Consumer Brand Engagement is defined as the energy, time, and effort which are invested by consumers invest while interacting with brands online (Fajarwati and Haliza, 2024). Thus, engagement also helps build a firm emotional connection with the respective brand, as well as increasing brand loyalty. If consumers have their preferred brand, they are more likely to recommend it to others as a positive word of mouth, and they have a high commitment to those brands. So, the greater the engagement leads to stronger the long-term brand loyalty. Moreover, Fajarwati and Haliza (2024) discovered that social media marketing activities significantly influenced brand loyalty across different generations. The interactive and accessible nature of social media platforms addresses both the emotional and cognitive needs of Millennials, which also increases their engagement with brands.

2. Social Media Marketing Models

Yapp et al. (2024) suggest a conceptual framework proving that Millennials and Gen Z respond most positively to influencers who are distinguished as trustworthy, attractive, and expert. The concept of “trustworthiness” in the context of influencer marketing refers to the moral values, honesty, and reliability of an influencer (Yapp et al., 2024). The findings show that trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise build a potentially strong relationship between influencers and their followers. Influencers can gain their followers' trust and preferences by sharing their authentic reviews of products or services and sometimes their personalized experiences. This technique enhances the authenticity of their image as well as the brands they promote. Yapp et al (2024) propose that brand marketers should collaborate with social media influencers who build strong relationships

with their followers despite having fewer followers so that marketers can give very strategic product messages to their targeted audience effectively.

Moodley and Ntobaki (2024) explore the psychological and behavioral responses of Generation Y to influencer content, recognizing that influencer marketing plays a vital role in shaping brand perception. According to their findings and analysis, the consistent and personalized content of an influencer can foster positive brand associations. However, when the contents seem misleading or forced, brand image can be affected. Moodley and Ntobaki (2024) discovered that Gen Y consumers appear to respond more favorably to influencers who are authentic, trustworthy, and transparent in their marketing activities. Influencers' credibility can also be accessed through likes and comments on their respective social media platforms. Moodley and Ntobaki (2024) further focus that these traits effectively influence purchase decisions, as Gen Y consumers are more likely to support brands promoted by influencers they are attached to, attracted to. This strong connection builds brand loyalty and the strategic importance of influencer choice in social media marketing campaigns.

In terms of theoretical perspectives, Moodley and Ntobaki (2024) discovered three main theories as social learning theory, the elaboration likelihood model, and the concept of Para-social relationships. These theories explain a comprehensive interpretation of factors influencing Gen-Y consumers' purchase decisions, brand insights, and trust.

In addition, Fajarwati and Haliza (2024) analyze the effectiveness of social media marketing activities on brand loyalty across different generations, such as Generation Z and Millennials. So, the findings point out that age differences remarkably affect the impact of Social Media Marketing Activities. As for Generation Z, they foster the brand engagement by participating the activities such as giveaways, polls, and quizzes. However, Generation Y shows less interest in interactive marketing activities since they may have privacy concerns. So, this generation gap in engagement levels can be described by different social media usage habits and varying levels of skepticism toward promotional content.

Fajarwati and Haliza (2024) mention that both Generation Y and Z show positive responses to informative content. According to the findings, it is confirmed that when content is accurate and trustworthy, it enhances engagement by building trust and offering value.

Informative posts not only provide authentic insights but also support emotional connections and inspire interaction with the brand. Consequently, reliable and accurate information fosters brand trust and drives higher levels of consumer engagement.

3. Social Media Influencer Marketing Overview

3.1. Definition and Evolution

Singh et al. (2024) explain influencer marketing as a development from traditional endorsement strategies toward more approachable, peer-based digital communication. According to Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025), influencer marketing has expanded across social media platforms from sharing information to promoting products or services. Thus, influencer marketing is an effective tool for attracting potential customers and fostering brand visibility. It provides highly engaging conversation rates in the beauty and fashion industries.

According to their findings, the younger generation spends more time on social media to explore modern trends. Conversely, people aged over 40 are less engaged in social media activities, and they hardly ever follow influencers and typically make purchases only when necessary. Moreover, Singh et al. (2024) claimed that influencer marketing tends to be more effective among the younger generation, especially individuals under 25 and those aged 25 to 40, as they indicate a higher level of engagement with influencers on social media platforms.

3.2 Types of influencers

According to Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025), Marketers can benefit from those platforms by building customer relationships and trust. Social media influencers are well-known figures on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. They are acknowledged for their large follower bases and strong influence within online communities. Moreover, their key responsibility includes creating engaging content to

attract and maintain followers. Unlike traditional celebrities, social media influencers know very well how to build mutual understanding with their followers by sharing personal thoughts and expressing preferences about products. There are five types of social media influencers based on the follower counts, such as mega influencers (more than one million followers), macro (100 thousand to one million followers), micro (ten thousand to 100 thousand), and nano-influencers (less than 10 thousand followers). However, many marketers are fascinated by Instagram influencers since they can promote new products, start trends, and grow sales.

3.3 Global Trend

Chen, Pham & Tran (2025) discovered that live video streaming has emerged as a dominant global and commercial tool through platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. According to the reports, 75% of firms generating over \$100 million in revenue have enlarged beyond traditional features of social media to comprise live video, and 53% plan to further invest in live streaming enterprises. Furthermore, one key difference between live streaming and traditional social media activities lies in its enhancing interactivity. In terms of live streaming, viewers can engage and communicate not only with the streamer but also with each other to discover suggestions. However, as a limitation, due to the very large size of the audience and the huge number of questions, streamers may have difficulties responding to all queries.

According to Chen, Pham & Tran (2025), Instagram has evolved into a widely used social media platform that focuses on visual communication through pictures and reels. In addition, Instagram aims to enhance global connection through visual storytelling. Unlike platforms such as Facebook, Instagram does not permit text-only content by strengthening its image-centric identity.

4. Factors Influencing Trust Towards Influencers

4.1 Authenticity

Even though mega and macro-influencers have larger followers, micro-influencers often build stronger relationships with their followers. Notably, Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025) discovered that micro influencers tend to gain higher authenticity for their promoted products compared to mega influencers.

According to their findings, brands should partner with influencers who can share similar values and develop authenticity with their followers to enhance marketing efficacy. The purpose of authenticity is to boost trust and image satisfaction, which also leads to higher purchase intentions. Although authenticity and attractiveness significantly influence brand image satisfaction, expertise does not. This finding points out that the followers are more drawn to engaging and genuine content rather than the professional quality of the influencers. As a result, it is discovered that the emerging influencers have become popular through engaging content. Thus, it is suggested to invest in such influencers to foster sales and build up brand identity.

4.2 Expertise

Yapp et al. (2024) mention that expertise is defined as how much people believe someone knows what they are talking about and how good they are in a certain sector. When someone is considered an expert, people are most likely to trust what they suggest. Hani et al. (2024) proposed that when customers experience new or unfamiliar products, they tend to rely on people who have an adequate amount of knowledge about those items. So, influencers' expertise plays an essential role in setting up their credibility, which in turn significantly impacts customers' purchase intentions and behaviors (Hani et al, 2024).

According to Yapp et al. (2024), the studies show that expertise can impact followers' purchasing decisions, particularly when there's a well-built emotional connection. The best example is that experts like doctors and scientists are trusted since they are considered genuine and knowledgeable. In the influencer context, influencers who have authentic experience with the products or services they promote are often considered more trustworthy and can greatly influence their followers' purchase intentions or decisions.

4.3 Attractiveness

Hani et al. (2024) claimed that audiences find content more attractive when they feel the source is familiar or like them, and a popular trend. Influencers always try to give a product or service message to their audience through their attractive content since they intend to capture the public's attention toward their content. The perceived attractiveness of influencers significantly portrays audience behavior, as individuals who reveal characteristics are often more popular and powerful within their community.

Moreover, Yapp et al. (2024) mentioned attractiveness not only as physical appearance but also by other qualities like personality and well-built ability. According to studies, it is suggested that influencers who are physically attractive are typically more appealing to followers. Their appearance can generate emotional responses that impact how people understand promotional messages. Furthermore, there are two types of attractiveness such as attraction, which means external appearance that influencers use to grab the attention of their audience, and allure, which reflects the emotional connection that can grow between influencers and their followers.

Hani et al. (2024) discovered that influencer attractiveness plays a crucial role in developing brand visibility and building up the level of consumer trust in the content that influencers create.

4.4 Transparency and Sponsorship Disclosure

Cao and Belo (2024) found that explicit sponsorship disclosure can influence how users respond to influencer content in both positive and negative ways. On one hand, marking content as sponsored grows followers' awareness that the post is an advertisement. As a result, it may reduce their engagement since it is sponsorship content, particularly for those who prefer genuine and authentic content. This is the so-called awareness effect. However, having transparency can enhance trust and achieve credibility, as it shows genuine professionalism from the influencer. Regarding signaling theory, publicly disclosing sponsored content may increase the influencer's reputation.

In addition, Cao and Belo (2025) claimed that marketers and influencers should avoid misleading the audience by concealing the commercial identity of their advertisements.

Sponsorship disclosure can not only develop audience trust and engagement but also avoid potential legal matters. Therefore, Cao and Belo (2025) proposed that companies should encourage influencers to make transparent and clear sponsorship disclosures and include needs in their contracts to ensure transparency is maintained.

4.5. Research Gaps

Yapp et al. (2024) proposed to do further research on social media influencers' effectiveness through different content, such as food, travel, and beauty. In addition, their study was conducted in Malaysia, so it is suggested to conduct further investigation of the perception of consumers from various cultural backgrounds. This allows for localizing findings and offering insights relevant to the Myanmar social media market.

Even though Fajarwati & Haliza (2024) and Moodley & Ntobaki (2024) address generational consumers' perception across different social media platforms, there is unexplored research analyzing how Millennials, particularly in Myanmar, respond to influencer characteristics such as frequency and transparency, and how these factors influence their trust and loyalty.

Rousseau et al. (1998, p. 395) and Ngobo. (2017) analyzes trust and loyalty individually in the context of social media influencer marketing. However, further discovery is necessary to address the connection between trust-building factors such as authenticity, expertise, transparency, and long-term brand loyalty, particularly in Millennial followers.

Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025) focus on the study of influencer types and user engagement, especially on the Instagram platform, but there are still unexplored platforms such as Facebook. Each social media platform enhances different types of user-influencer interactions, and the efficacy of micro influencer marketing may differ significantly across platforms. According to the existing literature, it analyzes only consumers' purchase intentions rather than purchasing behaviors. Thus, it is necessary to explore more about cross-platform comparisons.

Fowler and Thomas (2023) also assumed that influencers are related to internet fame, and they vary in their aspects, social media platform choices, and their follower counts. Further research should be made on whether influencer portrayals range across various social

media platforms, types of influencers, and cultures or not. Moreover, they highlight a gap that is related to ethical issues such as transparency in sponsorship content and the impact of unrevealed paid content on consumer trust and behaviors.

Schram (2024) claimed that there are some research gaps about giving deep insights into factors that influence trust and loyalty on Facebook and Instagram. Furthermore, how different types of content, such as reels, blogs, and streaming videos on those platforms, impact the trust and loyalty of millennial users is unexplored.

According to Aw and Agnihotri (2024), the audience will realize influencers' sponsored content as a growing marketing trend. Thus, they may think that influencer marketing has become less authentic. So, the authors proposed to continue further research to analyze those issues and discover more about consumers' feedback on having fake followers and the strategies of choosing the right influencers.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a mixed methods which includes quantitative and qualitative research designs, to analyse factors influencing millennials' trust and loyalty towards influencers on Facebook and Instagram in the context of Myanmar. In terms of quantitative approach, it was selected for its suitability in examining behavioural patterns and analysing the correlation between influencer traits and consumer attitudes.

Research design

A cross-sectional online survey design including a set of questionnaires was employed to collect data and measure key variables. This design allowed for data collection at a single point in time to analyse the current attitudes and perceptions of Facebook and Instagram users regarding influencers and sponsored content. Before taking the main survey, a pilot study is conducted to gain experience in the real survey. As for the pilot study, 5 participants who met the criteria were asked to take the survey, and feedback was collected from them, such as difficulties in answering the questions or any technical issues.

Moreover, secondary data from the previous literature review can be used to analyse and extract meaningful insights.

Participants

Millennials (Generation Y)

The targeted participants are millennials, also known as Generation Y, refers to born between the early 1980s to the mid-1990s (Lundin, 2024). There are several reasons why choosing this specific generation, the Millennials in this study. Firstly, it is the largest generation since the previous generation baby boomers. So, they represent a shift in generational mindsets. According to Lundin (2024), millennials are more flexible and open-minded than previous generations. However, they are also considered to be competitive, lazy, have short attention spans, and be materialistic. Next, in terms of technology, it is the

first generation growing up with the rise of technology, so they may struggle with face-to-face communication. According to Lundin (2024), 96 percent of individuals in this generation were using smartphones by the 2020s. In 2028, around 58.5 million millennials were using Facebook, and 43.3 million were engaged on Instagram the same year. Interestingly, those numbers continued developing in the 2020s. Furthermore, 87 percent of them used Facebook at least once per week, and 71 percent used Instagram in 2024. Following the growth of the social media trend among millennials, this study targets particularly at Millennials in the Myanmar context.

Baby boomers

Generation “baby boomers” appeared because of their significant rise in births that took place after World War II (Wagner, 2025). According to Carrillo-Durán et al (2022), the baby boomer generation is aged between 55 to 75, and they regard themselves as “digital immigrants”. However, they don’t use digital media only for basic communication purposes. In the digital marketing context, they are considered to have high purchasing power, especially women, they concerned about themselves and their family’s well-being.

Generation X

According to Schmitz (2022), Generation X follows the baby boomer generation. This generation was born between the 1960s and the mid-1970s. Interestingly, technology transformation deeply shaped Generation X. However, television also had a significant influence on the daily lives of Generation X.

Generation Z

According to Cooper (2024), Generation Z comes after Millennials, the period from 1997 to 2012. Their study mentions that this generation has regular access to the internet, and they are very comfortable communicating with people through online platforms such as text messaging, video calls, and so on. According to the research, they enjoy streaming platforms, short videos, reels, and interactive social media rather than traditional media.

Gender and Criteria

In terms of gender and characteristics, this study includes both male and female participants who are interested in blog reading and actively follow social media influencers, especially on Facebook and Instagram.

Geographic and sample size

In terms of geography, the data was collected from the Asia country, which is Myanmar, since influencer marketing has started emerging in Myanmar. This study targets Millennial participants in Myanmar who actively use social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Even though the targeted generation is millennials, a total of 219 responses were collected, including a few mixtures of baby boomers, Generation X, and Z, through an online survey.

Techniques

Primary data was collected as an online survey questionnaire using Google Forms through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and communication platforms like Viber, WhatsApp, and Messenger.

There are four main sections included in the survey. Firstly, demographic questions such as age, gender, occupation, social media platform preferences, hours of using social media, and the purpose of using social media are in section A. Secondly, section B is 5-point Likert scale questions ranging from 1(Not important) to 5(Very important). In that section, participants were asked to rate several influencers' characteristics such as authenticity, expertise, follower count, attractiveness, and communication style. The purpose of this section is to get participants' perceptions of influencer traits. Next is section C, which includes multiple-choice and open-ended questions. This section is to explore general trust and loyalty in respondents' recommendations and the reasons behind platform loyalty. Then, Section D mentions influencer rank and willingness to purchase. Questions measured

areas such as repeat intention, word of mouth behaviour, and emotional commitment. Finally, section E consists of multiple-choice and Likert scale items to understand how influencer rank impacts trust, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions. This section discovered the influence of influencer types such as mega, macro, micro, and nano on consumer behaviours.

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic Analysis (Definition and its importance)

Miller (2024) said that thematic analysis can be applied to analyse patterns or themes within a given data set, and it is used in qualitative research. This analysis has its own freedom since it is not tied to a particular theoretical framework. The analysis begins with researchers engaging themselves with the data through repeated arrangement to ensure familiarity, without including conclusions. In the next step, data is systematically coded by identifying and labelling similar themes. Finally, these coded elements are organized into wider themes that generate key patterns relevant to the research (Miller, 2024).

After identifying general themes, it is necessary to refine them by reevaluating whether data points align logically. If inconsistencies are found, themes may be revised. When it is finalized, researchers discover relationships between themes, and they often apply a thematic map to visualize these connections. Defining and interpreting each theme's meaning is to be done in the next step. And the final one is composing a formal report that constitutes the themes, supported by data examples, and describes their importance (Miller, 2024).

Application of Thematic Analysis

In this research, a thematic approach was selected to discover the subjective experiences and perceptions of millennial respondents regarding social media use and influencer loyalty.

Primary purposes of using social media

According to the survey results, participants identified various primary reasons for using social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. Four primary themes come up from the data: such as entertainment/ leisure, social connection, information/ learning, habitual use, and business/ career search.

Entertainment/ Leisure is defined as an activity that receives significant attention from an audience. In terms of social media, it is a type of entertainment because it gets attention from an audience through several types of content. Thus, social media can be considered the most popular type of entertainment over the years since it is easily accessible through smartphones, tablets, and computers (MacMillan, 2022). There are several key words that emerged from participants' responses in terms of their primary purpose for using social media, which can be interpreted as indicators of entertainment. The terms are fun, leisure, killing time, and relaxing, considering the recreational role social media plays in their daily lives.

Social connection can be defined as the interaction between individuals on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram (ScienceDirect, 2025). In addition, it reveals a lot of information about someone's community by following them on social media. However, these connections do not mean that they have known each other or not. For example, one of the main features of Facebook is making a list of friends by sending or accepting friend requests. This is another major purpose of using social media, as mentioned by participants' responses that include terms such as friends, communication, and social connections.

Habitual Use can be defined as a learned behaviour formed through repeated actions that are strengthened by positive outcomes or rewards (Meier et al., 2023). In addition, media habits are generated through reasonable associations between certain cues like notifications, app icons, and receiving likes, comments, or other types of peer validation. Keywords for this theme are post, habit, addiction, and notifications.

Information/ Learning on social media has become a trend over the years. People explored the latest news in the lastest newspaper or journals in the old days, but nowadays, the latest news can be discovered on social media channels (Macleod, 2024). Moreover, Facebook ranks first on the list, discovering that 30% of people are using it for updated news and

information (Macleod, 2024). This theme has been considered through keywords such as news, update, information, knowledge, reading, and search.

Business/ career search as well as job advertisements have become a trending feature on social media platforms, especially on Facebook. This is because social media is a good way to analyse someone's profile. Thus, social media can help with job hunting or career planning. There are several ways in which social media supports, such as networking activities and identifying job advertisements (Kavanagh & Farrugia, 2023). Keywords that have been reflected by this theme are business, money, job, advertise, and opportunities.

Reasons for Being Loyal to Influencers

According to the survey data, participants mentioned various reasons for being loyal to influencers. These can be categorised into key sub-themes by analysing keywords from participants' reasons.

Transparency and honesty

According to Gasner (2025), transparency is defined as the backbone of influencer marketing since it is very important to get audience trust. Having transparency means that no dishonest paid posts are made without any disclosure. This sub-theme is considered from some specific keywords from participants' data, such as honest, transparent, trust, and loyal.

Credibility of Influencers

Gasner (2025) mentioned credibility of influencers deeply depends on trustworthiness in them. It includes key elements such as expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Those things can significantly influence consumers' perceptions and purchasing decisions. Thus, this sub-theme is considered through some key words such as expert, real experience, and share knowledge.

Personal Familiarity/ habit

AlDarraji, Al Mansour, and Rezai (2020) claimed that familiarity means producing a sense of comfort and fostering the source's power. In the context of influencer marketing, the relationship between influencers and followers is generally one-sided. But, followers might feel familiar and have an emotional connection with influencers, leading to higher acceptance of their thoughts, especially purchasing decisions and behaviours. This sub-

theme is interpreted from the specific keywords such as seeing again and again, familiar, only use Facebook, and most used.

Popularity

According to the University of Maine (2021), worldwide social media users are 4.8 billion, which means that 59.9% of the world population is using social media nowadays. It can be considered that social media is very popular with the emergence of digital platforms. Key words such as widely used, popular, first platform, and most of the people are interpreted to form the sub-theme of popularity.

Review/ Information seeking

Maheshwari et al.(2024) highlight that reviews on social media platforms play a significant role by influencing social media influencers' image and follower loyalty and trust towards them. Positive reviews from influencers are deeply influenced by their product they promoted and the consumers' purchasing decisions. Keywords such as reviews, comments, comparison, and recommendations can be interpreted to form this sub-theme.

Content relevance

According to Ahrefs (2025), content relevance is defined as the state in which the content is matched with the preferences of the reader. In the context of influencer marketing, content relevance plays a crucial role in shaping the success of an influencer. Content, matches my interests, posts, and quality are keywords to translate this sub-theme.

Quantitative Analysis

In this study, a quantitative method is also used to analyse the relationships between influencer characteristics, trust, and loyalty among millennial social media users. The reason for using the quantitative method is that it allows for objective measurement, statistical testing, and generalization of the results from a typical sample. R was used to conduct this analysis to address the research objectives.

Application of Quantitative Analysis

Cleaning the survey data is the first step of the process, followed by coding and grouping variables to align with the analytical requirements. Descriptive statistics are applied to summarise participant demographics and key variables.

In terms of demographics, there are age, gender, occupation, and hours of social media usage per day. Regarding specific demographic variables, binary groupings were generated to clarify analysis and enhance statistical power. Firstly, gender was divided into male and female, with participants identifying lesbian categorised under female. Next, occupation was arranged as employed or unemployed, with full-time, part-time time and self-employed participants included in the employed category, and students were categorized under unemployed for analysis purposes.

In terms of brand loyalty towards influencer-promoted brands, participants were asked whether they remained loyal to brands promoted by influencers they trusted, and the response options were “Yes” and “No”. For analysis purposes, “Yes” and “Sometimes” were grouped to represent brand loyalty, while “No” indicated no loyalty.

According to the survey responses, seven factors were identified for analysis. These factors represent characteristics of social media influencers that could influence millennials’ trust.

Authenticity refers to the noticed genuineness and transparency of the influencer’s image and interaction with their followers (Baghel, 2024). When an influencer is considered authentic, their promoted brand image is seen as more trustworthy.

Frequency of posting refers to how often an influencer publishes content on their social media channel or platforms within a given period, such as daily, weekly, or monthly. It highlights the consistency of their content creation in a particular period (Alain, 2023).

The communication style of a social media influencer is that they can “think out loud” with other people. They are very fond of social interaction and tend to be very friendly, creative, and persuasive (GoffDupont, 2024).

Appearance and Attractiveness in the context of social media marketing are essential factors in catching public attention, as influencers with attractive qualities such as physical appearance, personality, or style are likely to gain greater popularity and influence followers’ behaviours (Hani et al.,2024).

Expertise in a topic refers to the perceived level of knowledge, capabilities, or understanding an influencer owns within a specific domain in the context of social media marketing. This expertise greatly influences the degree of trust level of consumers and plays a significant role in influencing purchasing decisions (Hani et al.,2024).

The number of followers of a social media influencer varies according to the types of influencers. There are four types of social media influencers such as nano (fewer than 10000 followers), micro (10000-100000 followers), macro (100000 – 1 million followers), and mega as well as celebrity influencers (over 1 million followers) (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024). Each influencer type provides different benefits, and the choice of influencer type can greatly influence the efficiency of a marketing campaign.

Transparency about sponsorships is very important to ensure followers are not misled. Thus, brands and influencers should disclose any paid sponsorships, products, or content. Having transparency about sponsorships will lead to promoting trust and credibility of an influencer (Meegle, 2024).

In terms of the rating scale for those seven factors mentioned above, participants were asked to rate the importance of each influencer characteristic when deciding whether to trust them using a five-point Likert scale, where:

1= Not important at all

2= Slightly important

3= Moderately important

4= Very important

5= Extremely important

This Scale allowed the quantitative assessment of how strongly each factor impacts trust perceptions.

Social Media Platforms

Facebook and Instagram are considered two widely used platforms in social media marketing. Facebook is more commonly used for networking and engaging with a wider audience, and Instagram often promotes aspirational lifestyles. Sharma and John (2024) mentioned that Facebook has over 2.8 billion monthly active users, while Instagram has over 1.3 billion monthly active users. However, Facebook reached 23.9% of Myanmar's population in early 2025, while Instagram has only 872,000 users. As a result, Facebook is the most popular platform in Myanmar, indicating significantly higher user reach compared to Instagram (DataReportal, 2025).

Platform Loyalty Measurement

In terms of the question "On which platform do you feel more loyal to customers?", four platforms' options were given in the survey questionnaire such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. However, for analysis purposes, Facebook and Instagram responses were categorised under their respective categories, while TikTok and Twitter responses were grouped under the category "Other".

Industry Group Classification

Regarding the purpose of analysis, influencer-related industries were categorised in the following groups such as Beauty, including skincare, cosmetics, and perfume; Fashion; Food, Technology; and Others, including travel, gaming, and entertainment.

Sponsored Content Classification

In terms of sponsored content, it was categorised into two main groups such as text-based and video-based. When it comes to text-based content, it typically includes content with written captions, blog-style posts, or descriptive posts. Regarding video-based based, it usually consists of reels, short videos, and live streaming videos.

Behaviours Towards Sponsored Content

Sponsored Content refers to paid advertisements in the context of social media marketing. A company or marketer works with an influencer who agrees to publish paid content promoting their products or services (Goff-Dupont, 2024).

In terms of behaviours towards the sponsored content section, participants were asked to indicate their behaviours towards sponsored posts created by influencers. A five-point Likert scale was applied, where:

1= Very negative

2= Negative

3= Neutral

4= Positive

5= Very Positive

This scale provided participants to show their level of receptiveness toward influencer-sponsored content.

Statistical Analysis

Loyalty purchase status (categorial data/ outcomes) is predicted by demographic variables (age/ gender/ occupation) and hours of social media usage per day using the generalised logistic regression method (model 1). Model 2 will be added by characteristics of influencers variables (authenticity, frequency of posting, communication style, appearance and attractiveness, expertise in topic, number of followers, transparency about sponsorships). The final model 3 will include five additional variables, such as types of trusted social media platforms, industry group, sponsored content, types of influencers, and behaviours towards sponsored content. Characteristics of influencers' variables are also analysed among various age groups (baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z) by a one-way ANOVA test.

All statistical analyses were carried out using R Studio 2025.5.0. For data visualization, the “ggplot2” package is applied.

Ethical considerations

All the collected data was treated with strict confidentiality, and all the participants were notified that the purpose of collecting data was only for Academic research related to this dissertation. Entire data will be permanently destroyed upon the completion of the analysis. In addition, participants were informed about the overview of the survey, including the nature of the questions they would be asked. Only the eligible and interested

participants were invited to take part. As soon as they agreed to participate, they received the online survey Google form via email or social media applications such as Messenger and WhatsApp. All responses were stored in a separate file with a secure password to ensure data security. The most important thing is that participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the survey at any stage, without the need to provide any explanation.

Limitation

Some methodological limitations should be addressed, although this research was carefully designed to meet its research objectives.

Firstly, although the total sample size of 219 respondents was sufficient for descriptive analysis, subgroup imbalances occurred between loyalty consumers (N=132) and non-loyalty consumers (N=37) may have decreased statistical power for specific tests and regression estimates.

Next are potential language and interpretation issues. Since all the targeted participants are from Myanmar and their first language is not English, their interpretation of Likert scale terms could have impacted how they understood and responded to questions.

Finally, the qualitative thematic analysis is based on survey short responses rather than in-depth interviews with targeted groups or individuals, which can limit the depth of awareness into participants' inspiration and experiences.

Findings and Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

Overview

According to table (1), the quantitative analysis identified differences between participants who responded no loyalty-based purchases (N=37) with those who responded loyalty-based purchases (N=132) across demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, perceived influencer behaviours, platform preferences, and purchasing attitudes. Chi-square tests were applied for categorical variables, and independent sample t tests for continuous variables.

Demographic and Social Media Usage

In terms of age, gender, occupation, most frequently used platform, or average daily hours spent on social media between the two groups, there was no statistical significance found ($p>0.05$).

Perception of Influencer Attributes

When it comes to influencer-related characteristics, four significant differences were discovered as below.

1) Number of followers (P= 0.020)

It is discovered that loyal consumers valued follower count more, with fewer seeing it as unimportant and more giving it mid to high importance.

2) Frequency of Posting (P= 0.008)

Regular posting as well as consistency of posting the content is more important for loyal consumers, with over half rating it as moderately important.

3) Communication Style (P= 0.026)

Loyal consumers more often rated communication style highly, showing a preference for engaging interaction.

4) Appearance and Attractiveness (P =0.017)

Loyal consumers tend to appreciate influencer attractiveness and appearance more, with fewer considering it insignificant.

However, there were no significant variations that emerged for perceived authenticity, expertise, or transparency about sponsorships.

Social Media Platforms Trust and Loyalty

In terms of platform loyalty, it varied significantly between groups ($P= 0.003$). Loyal consumers were more likely to examine Facebook as the platform where they felt the most loyal, with 38% vs 14%. However, non-loyalty consumers more often responded to no-platform loyalty with 49% vs 18%.

In terms of trust in influencer recommendations, it was strongly attached with loyalty-based purchasing, which is ($P < 0.001$). Interestingly, none of the loyalty consumers responded “Never” trusting recommendations from influencers, and 25% responded “often” trusting them, compared to just 2.7% among non-loyalty consumers.

Purchasing Behaviour

In terms of purchasing behaviour, loyalty consumers were significantly more likely to have bought a product promoted by an influencer compared to non-loyalty consumers (73% vs 47%, $P=0.005$). On the other hand, the frequency of purchasing highlighted a marginal difference, which is $P= 0.058$, with loyal consumers more often responding to occasional purchasing. There were no significant variations discovered for the industry groups of purchases, the type of sponsored content engaged with, or overall behaviours towards sponsored content.

Variable	No loyalty purchase N = 37	Yes loyalty purchase N = 132	p-value ²
Age	32.0 (4.1)	31.4 (3.6)	
Gender			0.921
Female	22 (59%)	75 (57%)	
Male	15 (41%)	57 (43%)	
Occupation			0.732
Unemployed	8 (22%)	23 (17%)	
Employed	29 (78%)	109 (83%)	
Social Media Platform used most frequently			0.220
Both equally	11 (30%)	34 (26%)	
Facebook	26 (70%)	88 (67%)	
Instagram	0 (0%)	10 (7.6%)	
Hours per day using social media	3.89 (2.08)	4.41 (2.19)	
Authenticity (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.308
1	0 (0%)	13 (9.8%)	
2	6 (16%)	15 (11%)	
3	8 (22%)	31 (23%)	
4	10 (27%)	27 (20%)	
5	13 (35%)	46 (35%)	
Expertise in topic area (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.473
1	0 (0%)	6 (4.5%)	
2	4 (11%)	25 (19%)	
3	10 (27%)	29 (22%)	
4	9 (24%)	31 (23%)	
5	14 (38%)	41 (31%)	
Number of followers (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.020
1	6 (16%)	10 (7.6%)	
2	16 (43%)	32 (24%)	
3	6 (16%)	55 (42%)	
4	7 (19%)	23 (17%)	
5	2 (5.4%)	12 (9.1%)	
Frequency of posting (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.008
1	9 (24%)	7 (5.3%)	
2	8 (22%)	23 (17%)	
3	16 (43%)	74 (56%)	

Variable	No loyalty purchase N = 37	Yes loyalty purchase N = 132	p-value ²
4	3 (8.1%)	22 (17%)	
5	1 (2.7%)	6 (4.5%)	
Transparency about sponsorships (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.973
1	6 (16%)	20 (15%)	
2	8 (22%)	25 (19%)	
3	9 (24%)	38 (29%)	
4	6 (16%)	24 (18%)	
5	8 (22%)	25 (19%)	
Communication style (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.026
1	0 (0%)	9 (6.8%)	
2	4 (11%)	16 (12%)	
3	16 (43%)	28 (21%)	
4	7 (19%)	49 (37%)	
5	10 (27%)	30 (23%)	
Appearance and attractiveness (1= not important at all..., 5= extremely important)			0.017
1	4 (11%)	7 (5.3%)	
2	15 (41%)	24 (18%)	
3	10 (27%)	41 (31%)	
4	6 (16%)	38 (29%)	
5	2 (5.4%)	22 (17%)	
On which platform do you trust influencers more?			0.519
Facebook	17 (50%)	69 (55%)	
Instagram	10 (29%)	40 (32%)	
Other	7 (21%)	16 (13%)	
On which platform do you feel more loyal to influencers?			0.003
All of the above	1 (2.7%)	7 (5.4%)	
Facebook	5 (14%)	50 (38%)	
Instagram	11 (30%)	39 (30%)	
None of the above	18 (49%)	23 (18%)	
Tik Tok	2 (5.4%)	7 (5.4%)	
Twitter	0 (0%)	4 (3.1%)	
Do you trust influencers' recommendation?			<0.001
Never	1 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	
Often	1 (2.7%)	33 (25%)	
Rarely	12 (32%)	16 (12%)	

Variable	No loyalty purchase N = 37	Yes loyalty purchase N = 132	p-value ²
Sometimes	23 (62%)	79 (60%)	
Yes always	0 (0%)	4 (3.0%)	
Type of influencers you follow the most			0.983
Macro+	26 (70%)	91 (69%)	
Micro	9 (24%)	33 (25%)	
Nano	2 (5.4%)	8 (6.1%)	
Purchased product promoted by influencer	17 (47%)	97 (73%)	0.005
How often do you purchase products?			0.058
often (regularly)	2 (6.7%)	9 (7.5%)	
Rarely (once or twice)	17 (57%)	40 (33%)	
sometimes	11 (37%)	71 (59%)	
In which industries do you mostly purchase products/services promoted by influencers?			0.163
Beauty	16 (43%)	74 (56%)	
Fashion	3 (8.1%)	16 (12%)	
Food	8 (22%)	11 (8.3%)	
Other	3 (8.1%)	6 (4.5%)	
Technology	7 (19%)	25 (19%)	
Sponsored content you engage the most			0.426
Other	1 (2.7%)	9 (6.8%)	
Text-based	7 (19%)	33 (25%)	
Video-based	29 (78%)	90 (68%)	
How do you feel about sponsored post by influencers? (1= Very negative , 5= Very positive)			0.563
1	1 (2.7%)	4 (3.1%)	
2	5 (14%)	12 (9.2%)	
3	27 (73%)	84 (65%)	
4	3 (8.1%)	23 (18%)	
5	1 (2.7%)	7 (5.4%)	

¹Mean (SD); n (%)

²Pearson's Chi-squared test

Table (1). “Demographic Characteristics, Social Media Usage, and Influencer-Related Variables by Loyalty Purchase Status”

Quantitative Analysis Results

Overview

A series of various regression models was conducted applying R to analyse the impact of demographic variables, influencer characteristics, types of social media platforms, industry group, content format, and consumer behaviours towards sponsored content on brand loyalty towards social media influencers. According to table (2), there are three gradable models that were tested such as Model 1: Demographic variables and social media usage, Model 2: Inclusion of influencer characteristics, and Model 3: Inclusion of social media platforms, industry, and content-related variables.

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	log(OR)	95% CI	p-value	log(OR)	95% CI	p-value	log(OR)	95% CI	p-value
Age	-0.05	-0.14, 0.06	0.4	-0.04	-0.15, 0.08	0.5	-0.08	-0.22, 0.06	0.3
Gender									
Female (reference)	—	—		—	—		—	—	
Male	0.09	-0.67, 0.88	0.8	-0.19	-1.1, 0.71	0.7	0.05	-1.2, 1.4	>0.9
Occupation									
Unemployed (reference)	—	—		—	—		—	—	
Employed	0.43	-0.58, 1.4	0.4	-0.15	-1.3, 0.93	0.8	-0.96	-2.5, 0.40	0.2
Hours of usage per day	0.12	-0.06, 0.32	0.2	0.17	-0.05, 0.40	0.14	0.13	-0.15, 0.44	0.4
Authenticity				0.02	-0.59, 0.63	>0.9	-0.17	-0.90, 0.52	0.6
Frequency of posting				0.55	0.04, 1.1	0.039	0.66	0.05, 1.3	0.039
Communication style				-0.38	-0.98, 0.21	0.2	-0.80	-1.6, -0.08	0.035
Appearance and attractiveness				0.65	0.19, 1.1	0.007	1.0	0.43, 1.7	0.0011.
Expertise in topic				-0.41	-1.1, 0.22	0.2	-0.25	-1.0, 0.50	0.5
Number of followers				0.24	-0.32, 0.82	0.4	0.20	-0.43, 0.87	0.5
Transparency about sponsorships				-0.10	-0.50, 0.28	0.6	0.00	-0.48, 0.47	>0.9
Platform									
Facebook (reference)							—	—	
Instagram							0.15	-0.99, 1.3	0.8
Other							-0.59	-2.0, 0.87	0.4
Industry group									
Beauty							—	—	
Fashion							-0.04	-1.7, 1.9	>0.9
Food							-2.2	-3.9, -0.72	0.004
Other							-2.1	-4.4, 0.24	0.072
Technology							-0.56	-2.2, 1.1	0.5
Sponsored content									
Other (reference)							—	—	

Variables	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	log(OR)	95% CI	p-value	log(OR)	95% CI	p-value	log(OR)	95% CI	p-value
Text-based							-1.8	-5.9, 1.5	0.3
Video-based							-2.7	-6.8, 0.50	0.13
Influencer type									
Macro+ (reference)							—	—	
Micro							0.64	-0.54, 1.9	0.3
Nano							0.71	-1.5, 3.9	0.6
Behavior towards sponsored content							-0.10	-0.87, 0.68	0.8

Abbreviations: CI = Confidence Interval, OR = Odds Ratio

“Table (2). Regression Model Predicting Loyalty Purchases Status Across Three Model Specification”

Model 1: Demographic variables and social media usage

According to model 1 results, they show that age, gender, and occupation were not statistically significant predictors of brand loyalty. In a similar way, daily social media usage did not have a significant connection. These findings mention that fundamental demographics and time spent on social media do not strongly influence loyalty towards influencers in this sample.

Model 2: Inclusion of influencer characteristics

Influencer-related variables were established in Model 2. According to model 2 results, they mention that posting frequency emerged as a statistically significant predictor of loyalty [Log (OR) = 0.55, 95% CI (0.04, 1.1), P= 0.039], highlighting that influencers who create content and post more frequently are likely to enhance loyalty. This finding suggests that the consistent posting nature of social media influencers not only keeps up followers' engagement but also strengthens the relationship between influencers and followers over time.

In addition, appearance and attractiveness were also significant [Log (OR) = 0.65, 95% CI = (0.19, 1.1), P= 0.007], proposing that physical appearance and other appealing qualities such as personality, style, and charisma are positively linked with trust and loyalty. Regarding other factors, such as authenticity, expertise, number of followers, and transparency, they were not statistically significant.

Model 3: Inclusion of Social Media Platforms, Industry, and Types of Content

According to the final model results, frequency of posting [Log (OR) = 0.66, 95% CI = 0.05, 1.3, P= 0.039] and appearance and attractiveness [Log (OR) = 1.0, 95%CI = 0.43, 1.7, P= 0.0011] remained constantly significant.

In terms of communication style, it indicated a significant negative association [Log (OR) = -0.80, 95%CI = -1.6, -0.08, P= 0.035], highlighting that definite ways of interacting with the audience may reduce perceived trustworthiness.

Regarding the Industry group, only the food sector showed a significant negative effect [Log (OR) = -2.2, 95%CI= -3.9, -0.72, P=0.004], resulting in food-related influencer promotions being less likely to stimulate loyalty compared to the reference category (beauty).

Therefore, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and other types of content, such as text-based and video-based, were not statistically significant.

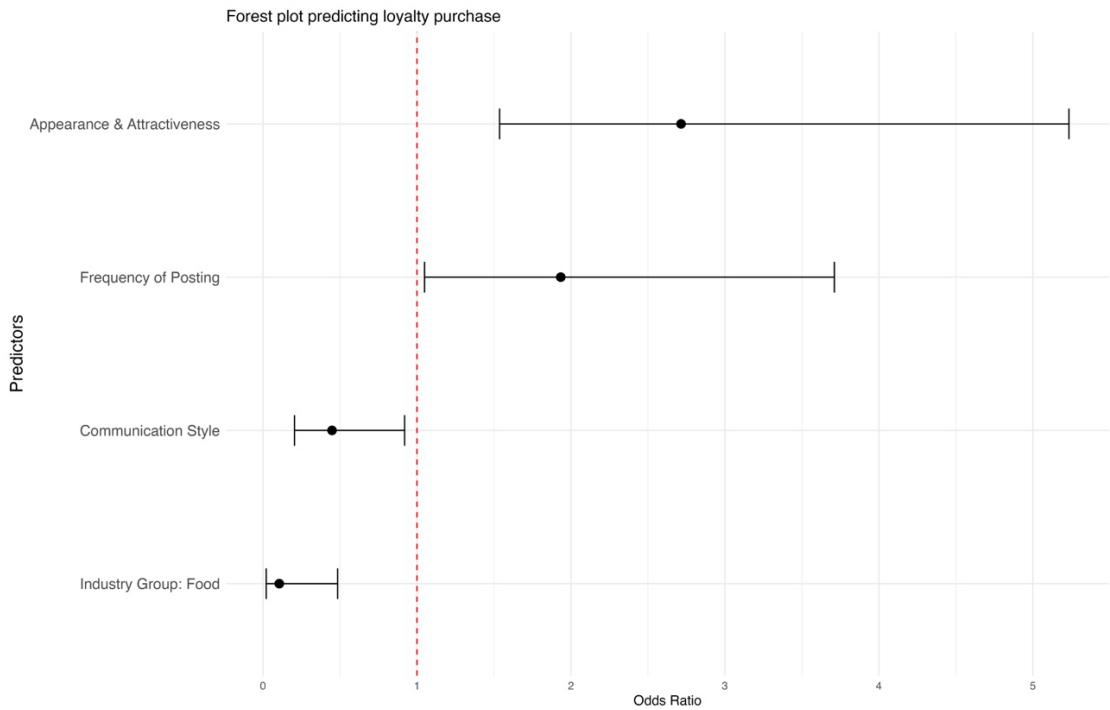


Figure 1: Forest plot of odds ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI) from Model 3 predicting loyalty purchasing

Figure 1 explains the forest plot for Model 3, highlighting a visual summary of the odds ratios and confidence intervals for each predictor of loyalty purchasing. According to the plot, it mentions that appearance and attractiveness had a clear positive association with loyalty purchases, with the total confidence interval positioned above the null value. This suggests that when consumers place higher significance on an influencer's appearance, the possibility of creating a loyalty-based purchase grows substantially. When it comes to the frequency of posting content on social media, it also showed a positive relationship, with more consistent posting connected to higher odds of loyalty purchasing. On top of that, this finding coordinates with the idea that regular visibility and engagement can build up followers' connection and inspire repeated purchasing behaviour.

However, the communication style indicated a significant negative association, with the confidence interval dropping entirely below the null line. This suggests that certain ways of interacting with followers, such as excessive promotion or less authentic approaches, may reduce perceived trustworthiness and consequently loyalty-based purchasing. Moreover, the food industry category also indicated a strong negative effect compared to the reference category of beauty, highlighting that influencer promotions in the food sector

were less productive in promoting loyalty purchases. Finally, social media platforms and types of content, such as text-based or video-based, did not indicate statistically significant effects, mentioning that these factors may be less influential once other variables are considered.

Result of Generation Group on Social Media Usage and Influencer Characteristics

According to the survey results, the participant demographics were distributed across different generations. Specifically, there were two respondents from the baby boomers, which represents the smallest group in the sample. A slightly larger generation group included six respondents from Generation X. On the other hand, the younger generation made up most participants, with 39 respondents from Generation Z and 172 respondents identifying as millennials. A series of one-way ANOVAs was conducted to analyse whether generation group significantly influenced hours of social media usage per day and perceptions of crucial influencer characteristics. There are several variables tested, including authenticity, expertise, number of followers, frequency of posting, transparency about sponsorships, communication style, and appearance and attractiveness.

According to data analysis, there were no statistically significant differences between generation groups for any of the calculated variables ($P > 0.05$). This result suggests that participants from different generations in this sample responded with similar daily social media usage patterns and comparable evaluations of influencer characteristics.

Qualitative Analysis Results

Thematic Analysis Results

Primary Purposes of Using Social Media

There are five dominant themes revealed from the thematic analysis of participants' responses in terms of their primary purposes for using social media.

- 1) **Entertainment** appeared as the most mentioned reason, with **56** participants showing activities such as fun, relaxation, and killing time.
- 2) **Information/ Learning** was the second most dominant theme, with **51** participants introducing news updates, reading, and general knowledge and education tips.
- 3) **Social connection** was in the third place with **32** participants, highlighting the role of social media in keeping up relationships and engaging with friends or communities.
- 4) Habitual use was ranked fourth, with 11 participants reflecting attitudes driven by routine or unintentional browsing, and they are often encouraged by notifications.
- 5) **Business/ Career** came up with **8** participants who used platforms for professional networking, job searching, or career-related purposes.

The generality of entertainment and information learning mentions that users in this sample fundamentally use social media as both a leisure and an information tool.

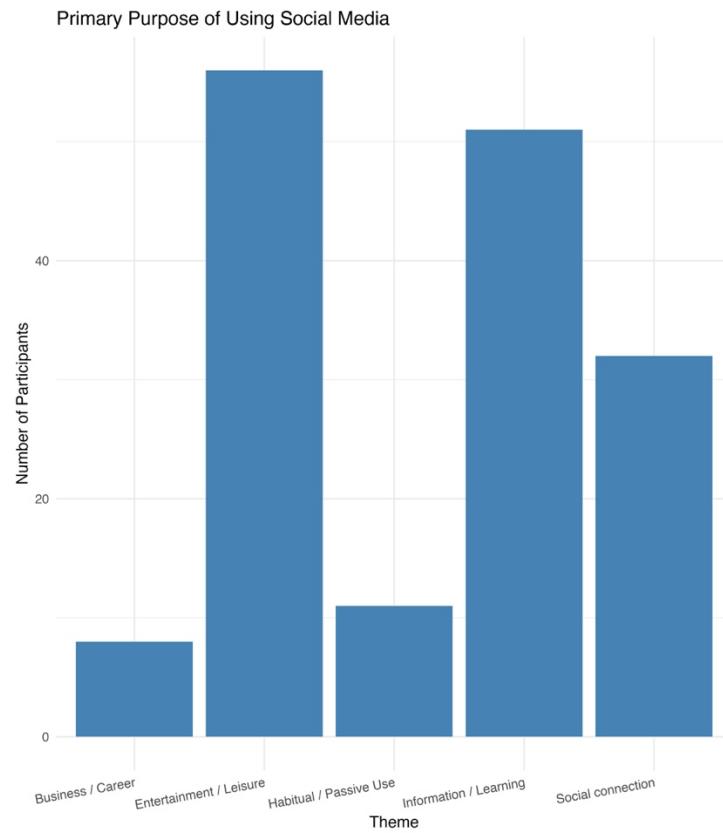


Figure 2: Primary Purpose of Using Social Media

Reasons for Feeling More Loyal to Influencers

Seven main themes emerged when participants mentioned their loyalty toward influencers.

- 1) **Transparency and Honesty** ranked in the first place, with 41 participants mentioning that transparent disclosure of sponsorships and genuine communication can enhance strong loyalty.
- 2) **Review/ Information seeking** can be considered as the second leading factor, with 15 participants highlighting the value set on influencers providing detailed and useful product information.
- 3) Credibility of Influencers and Personal Familiarity/ Habit were equally cited with 9 participants each, suggesting that both professional credibility and perceived closeness play crucial roles.

4) **Cultural/ Contextual Factors** with 7 participants and **Platform Usability** with 5 participants, which were not the most common themes mentioned, but still relevant in shaping loyalty.

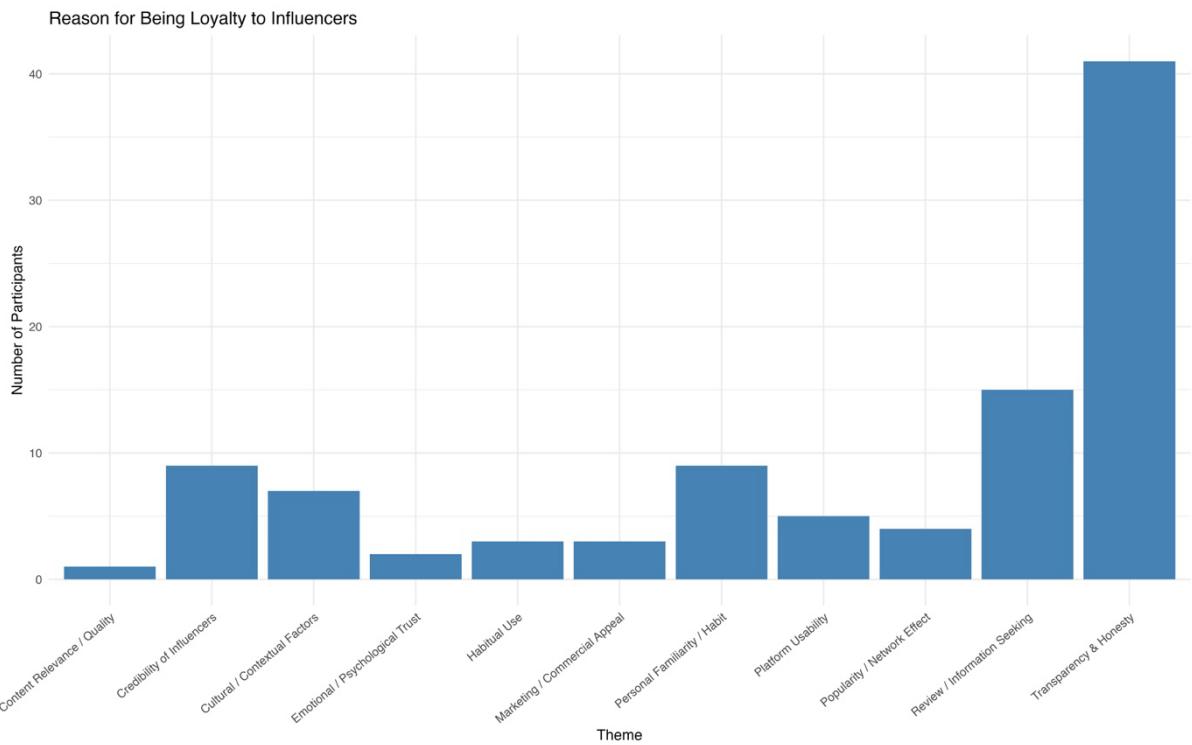


Figure 3: Reason for Being Loyal to Influencers

Discussion

This study discovered the factors influencing millennials' perceptions of trust and loyalty towards Facebook and Instagram influencers in Myanmar. Having the guidance of trust theory, loyalty theory, and influencer marketing models, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to address the main research question and four specific objectives. The findings and analysis of this research are discussed with each objective, with comparisons to existing literature and consideration of the Myanmar context.

Objective 1: Influencer Characteristics Influencing Millennials' Trust

Chi-square test and regression results analysed posting frequency, appearance, and attractiveness, number of followers, and platform loyalty as the most significant predictors of loyalty-based purchasing. In the final model, appearance and posting frequency remained significant even after managing for platform, industry, and type of content. Thus, these findings strengthen the literature's significance on attractiveness (Hani et al., 2024; Yapp et al., 2024) and regular posting and consistently interacting with followers (Moodley & Ntobaki, 2024) as key factors of audience engagement and trust.

On the other hand, communication style is often considered as a positive factor under the source credibility model (Karamchandani, Shukla & Shukla, 2025) indicated a significant negative association with loyalty. So, this suggests that specific communication styles that are likely to be perceived as excessively promotional or misleading may reduce trust in the Myanmar context. In addition, authenticity and transparency, which are widely known as trust-building factors (Baghel, 2024; Meegle, 2024), were not statistically significant in this research, probably showing that Myanmar audiences assess influencers entirely rather than identifying these individual characteristics.

Objective 2: Trust and Loyalty Across Facebook and Instagram

According to the Chi-square results, it indicated a stronger association between loyalty and Facebook than Instagram. Facebook is considered a primary loyalty platform for loyalty consumers, while there are no preference platforms for the non-loyalty audience. These match the existing data from DataReportal (2025), which identifies Facebook as the

dominant platform in Myanmar, getting a broader audience reach and potential engagement. However, the absence of generational differences in ANOVA results also suggests that platform loyalty and trust factors are consistent across age groups in Myanmar, which is different from existing findings by Fajarwati and Haliza (2024), who discovered generational variations in other contexts.

Objective 3: Impact of Influencer Rank on Purchasing and Loyalty

There are four types of influencer rank, which are nano, micro, macro, and mega or celebrity, and it was measured by using statistical analysis. The finding indicates that rank alone was not a significant predictor when other factors such as posting frequency, appearance, and follower count were considered. According to the existing literature, Karamchandani, Shukla, and Shukla (2025) proposed the authenticity of micro influencers. However, in the context of the Myanmar social media market, follower count may be considered as a stronger trust indication than influencer rank, since larger followers may be perceived as more trustworthy regardless of influencer rank.

Objective 4: Behavioural Responses to Sponsored Content

According to the findings of the regression model, both types of content, such as video-based vs text-based and social media platforms, were not statistically significant. Conversely, Chen, Pham & Tran (2025) highlighted the popularity of video content as a key engagement. On the other hand, the qualitative thematic analysis indicated that the participants appreciate content familiarity and perceived quality rather than format. Thus, the finding suggests that the layout of content with follower interests may exceed format preferences.

Cultural and Contextual Insights

In terms of cultural and contextual awareness, the Myanmar context builds on a layer to understand how trust and loyalty work in influencer marketing. In Myanmar society, trust is often built through community perceptions and social verification; for example, the

number of followers an influencer has rather than through platform-specific behaviours. According to the findings, authenticity and transparency were not significant predictors despite their significance in global studies. On top of that, promotional activities may be more welcomed in Myanmar, where followers often care more about an influencer's general image and popularity than whether every content or post feels entirely natural. When it comes to the food industry, a negative association suggests category-specific loyalty patterns. According to Yapp et al. (2024), content relevance is essential; beauty and fashion, with their passionate qualities, may better align with loyalty development than the more practical appeal of food promotions.

Practical Implications

According to the findings, it is better to focus on posting frequency, visibility, and influencing follower count as credibility signals when brands and influencers target Myanmar millennials. Overly described content or misleading communication style should be avoided, and the choice of industry group should align with consumer values as well. When it comes to generational segmentation, it may be less essential than previously assumed, allowing for larger campaigns that focus on shared preferences across different age groups.

Research Gaps

In terms of research gaps, they are identified in the literature by analysing Myanmar's market, discovering social media platform comparisons beyond Instagram, and assessing the role of posting frequency and transparency in the local cultural setting. The findings and results both align with the existing models since they ensure the importance of appearance, attractiveness, and consistency in posting content. However, there is a question to address, which is about the general suitability of authenticity, transparency, and communication style as positive predictors.

Conclusion

This study typically examines the factors influencing Millennials' perceptions of trust and loyalty towards Facebook and Instagram influencers in Myanmar, with a particular focus on influencer characteristics, platform variations, types of influencers, transparency about paid content, and behaviours towards sponsored content. In terms of quantitative and qualitative analysis, a combination of descriptive analysis, one-way ANOVA tests, and regression models was applied. Thus, this research provides not only establishment but also context-specific insights.

The findings in this study particularly highlight those definite qualities of an influencer, which are impressive attractiveness and posting frequency, consistently predict loyalty purchase behaviour, emphasizing the importance of visual appeal and regular engagement in influencer marketing. However, in this context, authenticity, transparency, and communication style, which often focus on global literature, were not significant, indicating that these factors may be interpreted differently in Myanmar society. Thus, marketers should realize this and strengthen the requirement by adapting strategies according to local cultural standards.

Industry differences also play a key role since beauty and fashion influencers are more likely to enhance loyalty than those in the food sector. So, this aligns with the identity-driven nature of beauty and fashion content, which can create a stronger emotional attachment with followers. In addition, demographic factors such as age, gender, and occupation, as well as daily social media usage, delivered only a small effect, suggesting that loyalty depends more on influencer characteristics than on audience demographics.

This study typically focuses on Myanmar influencer marketing, which is still growing. According to the findings, there is so much useful guidance for brands and influencers, such as how to build long-lasting relationships with millennial consumers, as well as what the unique characteristics influencing them are. While some parts of global influencer marketing models still apply, others need to be adapted to fit in the local culture.

On top of that, future research could focus on these results and findings by tracing changes and development over time by using in-depth qualitative methods and comparing various cultural settings. This would support growing understanding of how trust and loyalty

between followers and influencers evolve. Moreover, it is also ensured that not only academic research, but also digital marketing practices keep up with changing followers' expectations. Furthermore, this research was typically conducted in Myanmar, one of the developing Asian countries, so it may limit the generalizability of the findings.

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