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# INTEGRATING CONTENT AND INFLUENCER MARKETING TO ENHANCE BRAND ENGAGEMENT: QUANTITATIVE INSIGHTS FROM KENYAN MARKETING AGENCIES

## ABSTRACT

With the rise of influencer marketing, brands are searching for new ways to connect with their audiences in an increasingly crowded digital landscape. In response, this study investigates how Kenyan marketing agencies strategically integrate content and influencer marketing to increase brand engagement on social media platforms. A web-based survey and purposive sampling were used to collect data from Kenyan marketing agencies in 2023, while descriptive, correlation, and regression analyses were used for data analysis. Validity and reliability were established through a pilot test and internal consistency measures. The results, based on a realised sample of 87 responses, highlight the benefits of integrating content and influencer marketing. In particular, content marketing attributes such as relevance, authenticity, and consistency were found to be closely associated with higher levels of brand engagement in influencer marketing campaigns. Strategic partnerships and collaborations between brands and influencers further enhanced brand engagement. Interestingly, influencer marketing on its own was not a strong predictor of brand engagement. Therefore, this was a synergistic relationship that, when used together, achieved a level of effectiveness that neither could attain alone. This study addresses the paucity of research in the East African marketing context by providing culturally and geographically specific insights into how these strategies are integrated to drive brand engagement, overcome consumer scepticism, and build long-term trust. These insights have significance for marketers looking to tailor content marketing strategies to local contexts while taking advantage of the global rise of influencer marketing.

**Keywords:** brand engagement, content marketing, influencer marketing, Kenya, two-step flow of communication theory, social media, marketing communication, SDG 8, SDG 12

## INTRODUCTION

As brands are increasingly required to compete for the attention of their target audience on social media platforms, they constantly search for new and efficient ways to connect with their audience (Saulīte & Ščeulovs, 2022). One such strategy that has gained popularity in recent years and has the potential to provide a brand with an advantage over its competitors is influencer marketing. Influencer marketing is a form of marketing where brands work with social media influencers, such as bloggers, Instagrammers and YouTube personalities, to promote their products or services to a wider audience (Leung, Gu & Palmatier, 2022). This article argues that as influencers already create and share content, content marketing efforts can be useful when brand content is amplified by influencers due to their large following.

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach that focuses on creating and distributing content that is valuable, relevant and consistent. The goal of content marketing is to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action. According to Pulizzi (2013) and Ho, Pang and Choy (2020), content marketing educates and engages the target audience, builds brand awareness and establishes a trusting relationship with the audience. Besides influencing individual consumer behaviour, content and influencer marketing shape community dynamics such as ethos, emotional connections, and brand loyalty. This creates an environment that favours the development of online brand communities where members can connect, interact, share experiences, and freely discuss brand-related topics, leading to enhanced brand engagement (Martínez-López *et al.*, 2021). This multifaceted relationship enhances consumer empowerment, social connections and loyalty among community members. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how Kenyan marketing agencies perceive the strategic integration of content and influencer marketing to enhance brand engagement on social media platforms framed through the lens of the two-step flow of communication theory. Even though the concepts of content marketing (Bubphapant & Brandão, 2023) and influencer marketing (Tanwar, Chaudhry & Srivastava, 2022) are extensively documented in extant literature, globally the role of content marketing when engaging influencers is still not fully understood, particularly in the context of Africa. The lack of appropriate local resources still impedes the effectiveness of marketing strategies on the continent (Burgess & Malhotra, 2020), highlighting the need for additional research, which this study aims to accomplish. In this setting, the researchers are not aware of previous research that has investigated this topic in a Kenyan context.

This study seeks to address this knowledge gap by answering the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent does the integration of content and influencer marketing contribute to brand engagement for clients in Kenyan marketing agencies?
- 2) To what extent do content marketing attributes (relevance, authenticity, and consistency) correlate with brand engagement in influencer marketing campaigns?

To answer the study's research questions, a web-based survey was administered among Kenyan marketing agencies using a purposive sample. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis allowed the researchers to answer the research questions. Content and influencer marketing are powerful tools for enhancing brand engagement with global audiences. However, their effectiveness depends on cultural and geographical contexts, making it essential to localise content and collaborate with influencers who align with the target audience's culture and environment. This study contributes to the understanding of how content and influencer marketing are strategically integrated in the Kenyan context, providing practical insights for marketers and scholars.

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

The study's theoretical premise is anchored in the theory of the two-step flow of communication, which was first advanced in 1944 by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet in their work *The people's choice*. They explain how information flows from the media, through opinion leaders and, finally, to the masses (Katz, 1957; Choi, 2015). In this regard, opinion leaders, who tend to be more informed and credible and who exert some personal influence on their followers, emerge as the mediators of information from the media before it is consumed by the public (Choi, 2015; Nwokeocha, 2023). However, Choi (2015) posits that the social and technological changes that ensued from the advent of the Internet have brought about new dynamics in the flow of communication. This has allowed people to receive and send messages directly from the media; thus, eroding the role of opinion leaders as information gatekeepers. However, new opinion leaders called "influencers" have emerged in the social media era. Social media influencers have a major influence on their audience in relation to decision-making (Pöyry, Reinikainen & Luoma-Aho, 2022). In this study, the information gatekeepers are Kenyan influencers who advance the content marketing efforts of businesses by sharing and endorsing their content via social media for purposes of greater brand engagement. When marketers integrate content with influencer marketing, brands operationalise the two-step flow of communication theory, ensuring that content is not only created but also meaningfully amplified through credible influencers who enhance brand engagement.

### Content marketing

Since Rowley (2008) and Pulizzi (2013) advanced content marketing in the early 2000s, it has been widely recognised by both scholars and practitioners as a strategic consumer-centric digital marketing strategy that focuses on engaging consumers with content (Ho *et al.*, 2020). Content marketing has a historical precedent predating the 20th century, but it has evolved into a distinct field with strategic and tactical differences from advertising and sales promotion (Beard, Petrotta & Dischner, 2021). For example, being consumer-centric, content marketing enables brands to connect with their target audience in a more authentic and personal manner using brand content. As opposed to advertising, which emphasises promotional messages (Koob, 2021), content marketing focuses on the consumer with relevant and valuable content to gain the consumer's loyalty and trust (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Xie & Lou, 2024).

Content marketing can take many different forms, such as blogs, articles, videos, podcasts, infographics and social media posts. However, the content must provide value to the target audience in the form of information, entertainment or inspiration, and it should be consistent with the brand's values and objectives (Lopes & Casais, 2022). The content should further be shareable for more brand engagement (Suhendra & Stratan, 2024).

The primary goal of content marketing is to attract consumers to engage with content that resonates with them (Pulizzi, 2013). While the nature and the application of content marketing are well-documented, Beard *et al.* (2021) recommend that future research should focus on content marketing as a "value-creating activity" where there is always an exchange of value. Consequently, it is put forward in this article that content marketing can add value to influencer marketing because influencers create high-quality content and share it with their audiences while being compensated financially or gaining status because of their association with brands (Kapitan *et al.*, 2022).

Although content marketing can be defined in a variety of ways, such as digital content marketing (Rowley, 2008) or branded content marketing (Lou & Xie, 2021), for the purposes of this study, it is defined as a "strategic marketing approach for creating and distributing valuable, consistent, and relevant content to attract and retain customers" (Content Marketing Institute, 2017).

## Influencer marketing and brand engagement

Brands are seeking new ways to reach their target audience in a rapidly changing world. Influencer marketing has become appealing due to the increased use of social media and the need for authenticity and trust (Taylor, 2020; Han & Balabanis, 2023). As a result, it is re-emerging as a key strategy for businesses, including in Kenya (Muiruri, 2021), and this necessitates further scholarly investigation in the African context. Influencer marketing relies on influencers' trusted relationships with their followers, making their endorsements more impactful than traditional advertising (Lou & Yuan 2019). This could include sponsored posts, product placements, co-created content, and brand partnerships aiming to reach specific audiences with credible voices to enhance brand awareness, engagement, and sales (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Effective influencer marketing requires selecting the right influencers and building strategic partnerships aligned with brand values (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Cartwright, Liu and Davies (2022) emphasise identifying key personalities to attract potential customers. Businesses use influencers to connect more effectively with their target audience because influencers function as the gatekeepers of brand content, encouraging interaction (Foster, Borgatti & Jones, 2011). The COVID-19 pandemic further increased influencer marketing's popularity due to changes in online behaviour (Taylor, 2020). Social media platforms have created several opportunities for brand engagement and consumer brand awareness (Gumalang, Saerang & Arie, 2022). Accordingly, social media influencers play a key role in increasing brand engagement with business content. Yodi, Widyastuti and Noor (2020) define influencers as "people who have built a significant network of followers online and are seen as trusted tastemakers in one or several niches".

In this study, brand engagement is conceptualised as a multi-dimensional construct (Hollebeek *et al.*, 2014; Rasmiz, 2021) and it can be extended to influencer marketing on social media as follows:

- ◆ behavioural interaction (likes, comments, shares);
- ◆ cognitive engagement (consumer awareness and interest); and
- ◆ emotional connection (trust, satisfaction, and brand affinity).

Influencers play an important role in enabling these dimensions of engagement on social media by distributing content that appears more personal and trustworthy than corporate advertising. Their ability to embed brand messages within relevant and entertaining content enhances consumer awareness, trust and audience engagement (Benevento *et al.*, 2025).

Scholarly perspectives on social media engagement highlight that trust influences consumer engagement directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction (De Oliveira Santini *et al.*, 2020). As trustworthy businesses experience higher engagement and satisfaction, building trust is essential for meaningful social media interactions. This study applies these perspectives to brand engagement, arguing that for engagement to occur via social media influencers, consumers must engage in transactions and brand-related behaviours (*ibid.*).

## Influencer marketing in Kenya

Following social media influencers is a popular practice among Kenyans (Wamuyu, 2020), creating an ideal environment for influencer marketing. A survey conducted in Kenya and Nigeria by GeoPoll (an international research business) indicated that most Kenyans (100% of the respondents) follow social media influencers, across different niche topics, who use content to engage their followers (Kibuacha, 2020). The niche topics are varied and focus on popular issues including lifestyle, fashion, and technology. Subsequently, Kenya has witnessed a substantial increase in the prevalence of influencer marketing, with even state ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) showing interest in this marketing strategy to gain more publicity for their projects (Odhiambo, 2021).

Influencers in Kenya typically create their own content and use social media tools like video posts and live chats to engage followers (Wamuyu, 2020), which could result in the creation of online brand communities. These are virtual communities who are bound together by certain brand products where they share experiences and develop sustainable relationships and loyalty as brand admirers (Kwamboka & Owino, 2024). These communities leverage virtual forums via online platforms (such as social media) to support engagement, gather user feedback through product reviews, and build customer loyalty. Product reviews are highly influential in providing pre-purchase information, enhancing authenticity, trust, and connection with influencers. With the rise of platforms like Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, many Kenyan users have gained significant followings and now promote products for payment (Dev, 2020; Wamuyu,

2020). A GeoPoll report shows that Facebook is the most popular social platform in Kenya (85%), followed by YouTube (73%) and Instagram (63%) (Kibuacha, 2020). Influencers with relevant content attract and retain large, emotionally committed followings, impacting followers' purchasing decisions. For example, celebrity influencers, Lupita Nyong'o, Eric Omondi and Tanasha Dona, have 11.6 million, 4.6 million and 4.2 million Instagram followers respectively (StarNgage, 2024).

While brands and businesses in Kenya acknowledge influencers' reach, their strategies for selecting influencers may be outdated. Many compete for the same paid influencers, ignoring shifting consumer perceptions and doubts about campaign authenticity. This can undermine credibility, especially among younger audiences (Odhiambo, 2021). Data indicates that Kenyans distrust paid influencer recommendations (Dev, 2020); therefore, Kenyan businesses should focus on directly engaging consumers and encouraging long-term brand loyalty by targeting consumer communities and enhancing trust (Odhiambo, 2021). This article suggests that influencer marketing should be integrated into a broader content marketing strategy to enhance consumer engagement and brand visibility.

## METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, a quantitative inquiry using statistical analysis was conducted to examine the perceived role of content marketing within influencer marketing for enhancing brand engagement in Kenya. The study adopted a positivist worldview and a quantitative research approach, using an objective, deductive, and quantifiable method. This includes an exploratory web-based survey among Kenyan marketing agencies (Asenahabi, 2019; Mohajan, 2020).

A total of 100 content marketing agencies were purposively selected based on the sample frame of Kenyan marketing agencies highlighted by TopSEObrands (2024). To qualify, marketing agencies needed an active social media presence and involvement in content marketing. Representatives from these agencies comprised the unit of analysis. According to Memon *et al.* (2020), a small sample size of not less than 50 participants can be adequate for noncomplex quantitative analysis although it might limit the scope of analysis. In this regard, Indrayan and Mishra (2021) state that a small sample size of less than 100 can still yield desired results if the study's aim is to explore phenomena or estimate relationships rather than to establish definitive causal relationships or to test hypotheses. The data were collected cross-sectionally in August and September 2023 via a web-based questionnaire on Google Forms, featuring 30 items. Of these, 25 closed-ended statements were measured using a Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree), and five questions covered demographic information.

The questionnaire focused on areas such as agencies' understanding and use of influencer marketing and content marketing; the role of content marketing in the success of influencer marketing; brand engagement and the effectiveness of influencer marketing in driving engagement; strategic partnerships and collaborations between brands and influencers; and, lastly, the challenges and opportunities faced by Kenyan marketing agencies when it comes to influencer marketing and content marketing.

Due to the nature of the study, the pool of respondents was limited. Out of the 100 targeted respondents, 87 completed and submitted questionnaires, resulting in an 87% response rate. While this sample size limited statistical power and generalisation to the larger population, the results still provided insights into marketing agencies' perceptions of content marketing's role in influencer marketing for enhancing brand engagement. The researchers were more interested in the quality of responses, rather than the quantity.

The agencies were invited via email to complete the survey, they were informed about the study's purpose and their role, and they provided consent before participating. The study received ethics approval from the University of South Africa (1115685\_CREC\_CHS\_2023) and Egerton University in Kenya (EUISERC/APP/271/2023), respectively, including a research permit from Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI/P/23/27978).

### Validity and reliability of the study's findings

Construct validity was achieved in that the measurement aligns with the literature as put forward by Mochon and Schwartz (2019). Regarding scale reliability, the questionnaire was first piloted among 15 social media marketers who had the same characteristics as those in marketing agencies included in this study.

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency of the entire set and the set of items for the key constructs of the questionnaire. This coefficient has a maximum value of 1.0 (a scale having a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.60 or larger is reliable). In terms of scale reliability, the constructs for the entire set had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.947, which was closer to 1.0, thus indicating great internal consistency of the 25 items in the scale. The five items have a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.869 for the items on influencer marketing, 0.890 for content marketing, 0.856 for engagement, 0.808 for partnership and collaboration, and .750 for challenges and opportunities, which is an indication of a high level of internal consistency for all sets of items in the questionnaire.

**TABLE 1:** RELIABILITY TEST RESULTS FOR THE ENTIRE SET

<b>Reliability statistics for the entire set</b>		
Cronbach's Alpha $\alpha$		Number of items
.947		25
<b>Reliability statistics for the set of items in the questionnaire</b>		
Cronbach's Alpha $\alpha$	Cronbach's Alpha based on standardised items	Number of items
Influencer marketing		
.869	.871	5
Content marketing		
.890	.891	5
Engagement		
.856	.856	5
Partnership and collaboration		
.808	.811	5
Challenges and opportunities		
.750	.765	5

## DATA ANALYSIS

The statistical software SPSS version 25.0 was used to facilitate the process of data analysis. The collected data was first validated, edited and coded before it was analysed.

Given the realised sample size of 87, multivariate correlation and multiple linear regression analysis offered simplicity, rigour and direct insights into the data. Also, as not much information is available about the topic in the geographical context of Kenya, using descriptive and multivariate correlation and regression analyses allowed more insights into the interconnections that exist among the key constructs of this study (Shrestha, 2021). Due to the small sample size of 87, a factor analysis was not feasible.

## RESULTS

Descriptive, correlation and regression analyses guided the interpretation of the results. The results are first reported in terms of sample characteristics, followed by the results of descriptive statistics, and multivariate correlation and multiple linear regression analysis.

### Sample characteristics

Figure 1 shows the characteristics of the sample. Slightly more than half were male (56%, n=49) and 44% were female (n=38). Most of the respondents (59%, n=51) had college or trade school certification, with none holding a doctorate. The majority (95%, n=83) were aged 18 to 54 years, with only 5% (n=4) above 55 years. Most (70%, n=61) had over five years of marketing experience. Middle management comprised 67% (n=58) of the sample, while 10% (n=9) were directors/CEOs. Most of the respondents

were under 55, had post-secondary education, and were experienced in content and influencer marketing.

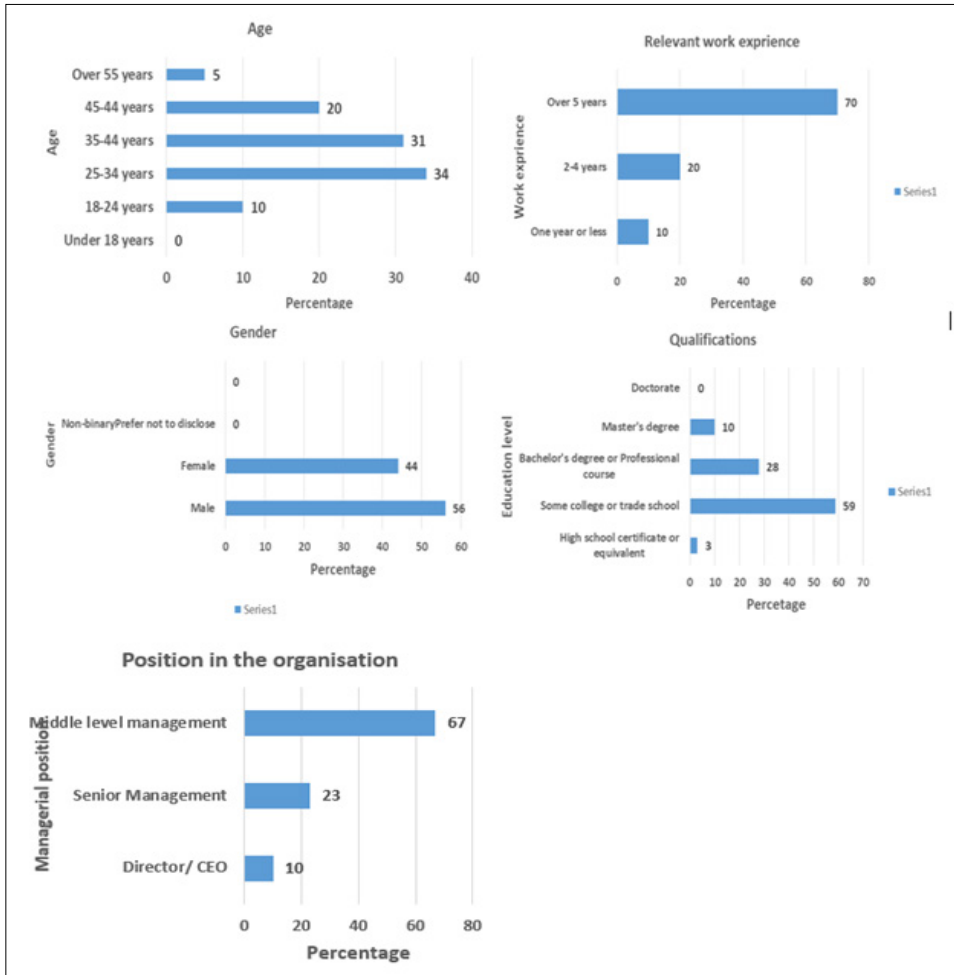


FIGURE 1: SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY

## Descriptive statistics of the dataset

The descriptive statistics provide a concise summary of the responses for each construct, namely content marketing, influencer marketing, engagement, partnership and collaboration, and challenges and opportunities, to facilitate easier interpretation of the data. As shown in Table 2, the mean values for the items within these constructs range from 2.45 to 3.95. A score between 2.0 and 2.99 indicates disagreement, while a score between 3.0 and 3.99 indicates agreement.

TABLE 2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Influencer authenticity and content relevance	2.66	1.218	87
Positive client experiences with influencer marketing	2.51	1.302	87
Agency perception of content marketing effectiveness	2.45	1.149	87
Effectiveness of long-term partnerships	3.38	1.287	87
Creative approaches to influencer and content marketing	3.95	1.033	87

### Choosing the items of components to be extracted for analysis

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA) method was used to transform the large dataset into lower components while preserving most of the original information. With PCA the items representing the constructs were selected to be used for further analysis as depicted in Table 3. The item exhibiting the highest variance in the component matrix table from the set of the five variables was selected for further analysis.

The components for the construct *influencer marketing* ( $M=2.51$ ,  $SD=1.302$ ) range from 0.727 to 0.897, indicating strong correlations of the item with each component. Item 4 (positive client experiences with influencer marketing), with the highest variance (0.897), was chosen.

The component matrix for the construct *content marketing* ( $M=2.66$ ,  $SD=1.218$ ) range from 0.734 to 0.872, where item 7 (agency perception of content marketing effectiveness) was selected for further analysis as it had the highest variance (0.872).

The component matrix for the construct *engagement* ( $M=2.45$ ,  $SD=1.149$ ) range from 0.696 to 0.883, where item 14 (influencer authenticity and content relevance) with the highest variance (0.883) was also chosen for further analysis.

The component matrix for the construct *partnership and collaboration* ( $M=3.38$ ,  $SD=1.287$ ) range from 0.690 to 0.822, where item 19 (effectiveness of long-term partnerships) with the highest variance (0.822) was chosen for further analysis.

The component matrix for the construct *challenges and opportunities* ( $M=3.95$ ,  $SD=1.033$ ) ranged from 0.505 to 0.843, where item 24 (creative approaches to influencer and content marketing), which had the highest variance (.843), was selected for further analysis.

TABLE 3: COMPONENT MATRIX FOR THE CONSTRUCTS

<b>A. Influencer marketing</b>	
Good understanding of what influencer marketing is	.727
Influencer marketing as an effective marketing strategy	.863
Audience engagement with influencers on social media platforms	.823
<b>Positive client experiences with influencer marketing</b>	
Influencer marketing alignment with marketing products or services	.750
<b>B. Content marketing</b>	
Understanding of content marketing	.734
<b>Agency perception of content marketing effectiveness</b>	
Frequency of the use of content marketing	.861
Content marketing's value to marketing strategy	.866
Content marketing's role in influencer marketing campaigns	.839
<b>C. Engagement</b>	
Influencer marketing as a metric to measure influence marketing campaign	.696
Influencer marketing as a metric to measure engagement	.809
Influencer marketing as an effective strategy for clients	.867
<b>Influencer authenticity and content relevance</b>	
Promoting two-way dialogue	.723
<b>D. Partnerships and collaborations</b>	
Strategic partnerships and collaborations	.690
Criteria to select influencers	.694
Influencer-brand partnerships	.782
<b>Effectiveness of long-term partnerships</b>	
Influencer-brand collaborations	.781
<b>E. Challenges and opportunities</b>	
Influencer marketing and content marketing	.733
Challenges in influencer and content marketing	.505
Strategies to overcome challenges	.677
<b>Creative approaches to influencer and content marketing</b>	
Future of influencer and content marketing in Kenya	.816

## Multivariate correlation analysis

After the PCA method, multivariate correlations were performed to simultaneously examine multiple variables to reveal the complex relationships between the constructs, *influencer marketing, content marketing, engagement, partnerships and collaboration,*

and *challenges and opportunities*. On the other hand, correlation coefficients were used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between pairs of variables within and across constructs, as depicted in Table 4.

The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) for this study was calculated using the items related to *engagement* as the dependent construct, the items related to *influencer marketing* and *content marketing* as the independent constructs, with the items related to *partnerships and collaboration*, and *challenges and opportunities* as moderating constructs. The correlation between *engagement* and *influencer marketing* was  $r=0.529$ , indicating a moderate positive correlation. The two-tailed significance value was 0.000 when tested at 95 percent confidence, meaning it is significant. Therefore, an increase in the variable *influencer marketing* would lead to 0.529 unit increase in the variable *engagement*. This means that any effort on influencer marketing by the marketing agencies would lead to increase in brand engagement through at moderate level.

Regarding the relationship between *content marketing* and *engagement*, the correlation value is  $r=0.602$ , implying a moderate positive correlation. In this linear relationship, the two-tailed significance value was significant at 0.000, when statistically significant at the .001 level. This means that efforts to increase *content marketing* will increase *brand engagement* by 0.602 units in a linear fashion.

In relation to the moderation effects on the relationship between *influencer marketing* and *brand engagement*, the variable *partnerships and collaboration* had a correlation value of  $r=0.514$ , indicating a moderate positive correlation of significant value of .000 when tested at 95% confidence value. It is concluded that the moderator *partnerships and collaboration* had a positive moderate significant moderating effect on the relationship between *influencer marketing* and *brand engagement*. On the other hand, the moderating variable of *challenges and opportunities* ( $r=0.366$ ) would relate to a positive increase in the relationship between *content marketing* and *brand engagement*, although the strength was weak. This implies that a unit increase in the variable *challenges and opportunities* would be associated with a 0.366 unit increase in the relationship between *influencer marketing* and *brand engagement*, which is statistically significant at the .001 level. Table 4 summarises the correlation matrix.

TABLE 4: CORRELATIONS MATRIX

		<b>Correlations</b>				
		Influencer authenticity and content relevance	Positive client experiences with influencer marketing	Agency perception of content marketing effectiveness	Effectiveness of long-term partnerships	Creative approaches to influencer and content marketing
Influencer authenticity and content relevance	Pearson Correlation	1	.529**	.602**	.514**	.366**
	Sig. (two-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	87	87	87	87	87
Positive client experiences with influencer marketing	Pearson Correlation	.529**	1	.663**	.363**	.208
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000		.000	.001	.054
	N	87	87	87	87	87
Agency perception of content marketing effectiveness	Pearson Correlation	.602**	.663**	1	.316**	.331**
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000	.000		.003	.002
	N	87	87	87	87	87
Effectiveness of long-term partnerships	Pearson Correlation	.514**	.363**	.316**	1	.179
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000	.001	.003		.096
	N	87	87	87	87	87
Creative approaches to influencer and content marketing	Pearson Correlation	.366**	.208	.331**	.179	1
	Sig. (two-tailed)	.000	.054	.002	.096	
	N	87	87	87	87	87

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

### Regression analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to analyse the linear relationships between multiple independent variables and one dependent (Hariyanto *et al.*, 2020). Table 5 below offers a summary of the regression analysis conducted to determine the strength of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

For this study, the residuals met the criteria of normal distribution, autocorrelation, and no heteroscedasticity. The regression analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used to test and compare between groups or conditions being compared to see whether there

are variances within them. As shown in the model summary (Table 5), the multiple correlations were positive with a coefficient of 0.716 and the items were significant and accounted for 51.30% of the variation in the dependent variable engagement. Moreover, the Durbin-Watson, which assesses autocorrelation, had a value of 1.881, which shows that the residuals are positively serial correlated as the value is below 2.0. The regression analysis of content marketing's role within influencer marketing revealed that four items, namely, *positive client experiences with influencer marketing*, *agency perception of content marketing effectiveness*, *effectiveness of long-term partnerships*, and *creative approaches to influencer and content marketing* had a significant influence on *engagement*, with a significant value of 0.000 when tested at 95% confidence level. The overall model is significantly useful in explaining *influencer authenticity and content relevance*, which represents brand engagement,  $F(4,82)=21.57, p < .05$ .

TABLE 5: ANOVA TABLE

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
1	.716 <sup>a</sup>	.513	.489	.871	1.881	
ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	65.448	4	16.362	21.568	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	62.207	82	.759		
	Total	127.655	86			
Note. a. Predictors: (Constant), influencer marketing, content marketing, engagement, partnerships and collaboration, and challenges and opportunities.						
b. Dependent Variable: Engagement						

As shown in Table 6, the findings indicate that the independent variables (*influencer marketing*, *content marketing*) simultaneously influence the dependent variable (*engagement*). With a one unit increase in *influencer marketing* efforts, the *brand engagement* will result in a .138 increase, which was found not to be a significant,  $t(82)=1.40, p = 0.166$ . Further, with a one unit increase in *content marketing* efforts, the *brand engagement* increases by .370, which was found to be a significant change,  $t(82)=3.26, p < .05$ . On moderation effects on the relationships with an increase of one unit in *partnership and collaboration*, the relationship between *influencer marketing* and *brand engagement* would tend to increase by .304, which was found to be a significant change,  $t(82)=3.85, p < .05$ . Moreover, with a one unit increase in *challenges and opportunities*, the relationship between *content marketing* and *brand engagement* was likely to experience a positive increase by .191, which was found not to be a significant change,  $t(82)=1.98, p = .051$ . Therefore,  $brand\ engagement = -381 + (.14* influencer\ marketing) + (.37* content\ marketing) + (.30* partnerships\ and\ collaboration) + (.19* challenges\ and\ opportunities)$ , as shown in Table 6.

**TABLE 6: TABLE OF COEFFICIENTS**

<b>Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>						
Model B		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	-.381	.418		-.912	.365
	Positive client experiences with influencer marketing	.138	.099	.148	1.398	.166
	Agency perception of content marketing effectiveness	.370	.114	.349	3.255	.002
	Effectiveness of long-term partnerships	.304	.079	.322	3.848	.000
	Creative approaches to influencer and content marketing	.191	.097	.162	1.978	.051

a. Dependent Variable: Influencer authenticity and content relevance

### Residuals normality assumption

The histogram of the residual is used to see whether the variance is normally distributed. Figure 2 below illustrates that the residuals (and hence the error terms) are normally distributed. However, there were three extreme outliers with two values larger than 2 and one smaller than -2, but these do not substantially distort the overall distribution.

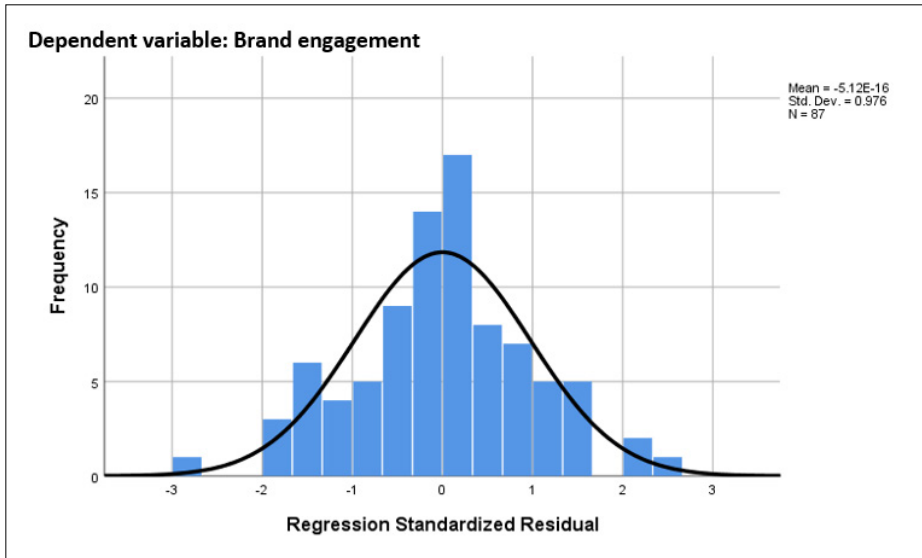


FIGURE 2: RESIDUALS NORMALITY

The variables are required to be normally distributed in a multiple linear regression analysis. As shown in Figure 3, the residuals are approximately normally distributed, as the data points lie close to the diagonal line with no substantial deviations. This indicates that the normality assumption was satisfied.

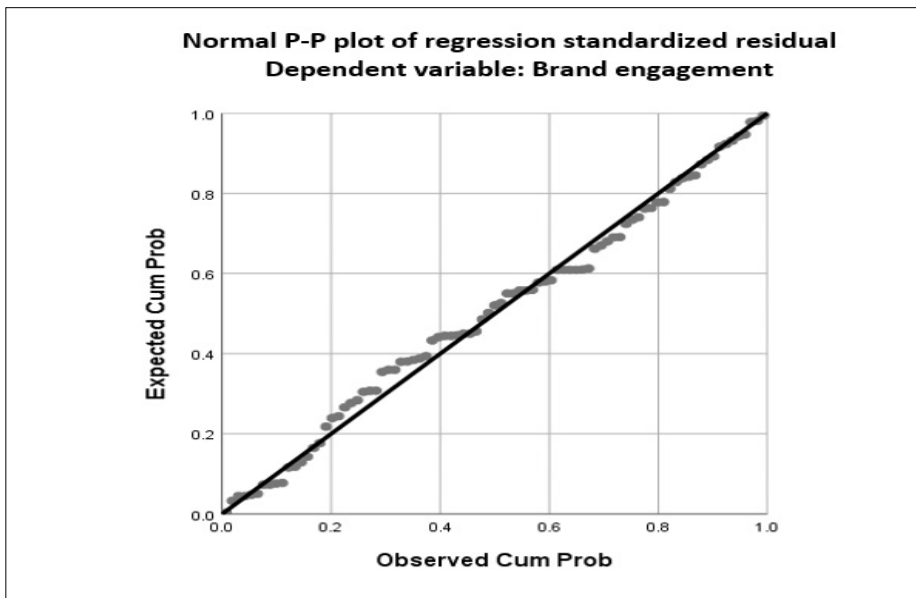


FIGURE 3: RESIDUALS NORMALITY TEST DATA PLOT

## Heteroscedasticity check

The best way of checking a scatter plot of residuals versus predicted values would be the visual examination. In an ideal situation, residuals are supposed to be in a horizontal line and randomly scattered above and below or around 0 with no specific pattern in the distribution. As shown in Figure 4 below, the residuals are approximately evenly scattered above and below zero, indicating that the assumption of homoscedasticity was satisfied.

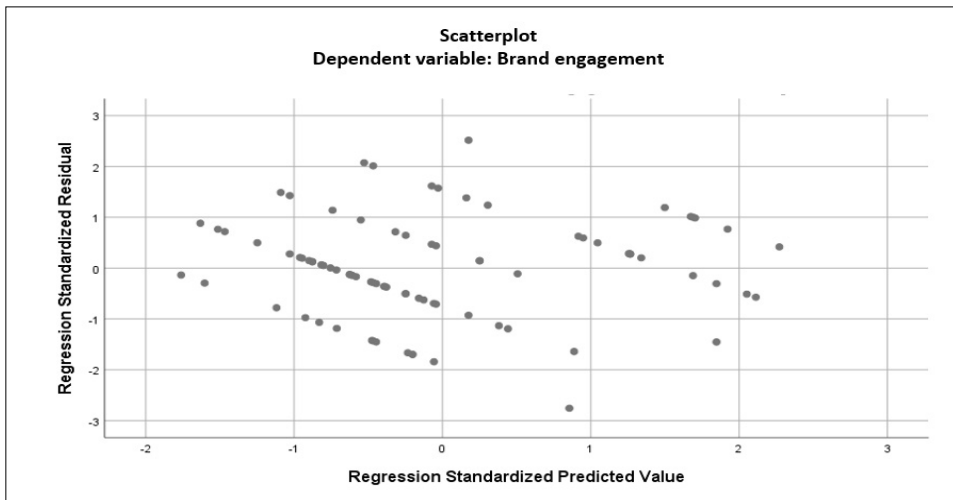


FIGURE 4: HOMOSCEDASTICITY CHECK SCATTERPLOT

## DISCUSSION

The study aimed to investigate how Kenyan marketing agencies perceive the strategic integration of content marketing and influencer marketing in enhancing brand engagement on social media, using a quantitative web-based survey.

Returning to Research Question 1, the results indicate that the strategic integration of content and influencer marketing contributes moderately to brand engagement for the clients of Kenyan marketing agencies. The findings show a positive correlation between content marketing and brand engagement, with a Pearson correlation value of  $r=0.602$ , indicating that efforts to increase content marketing were associated with a significant linear increase in brand engagement.

The regression analysis revealed that content marketing had a statistically significant relationship with brand engagement, with a one-unit increase in content marketing efforts tending to increase brand engagement by 0.370 unit ( $t=3.26$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that the integration of content marketing within influencer marketing strategies can effectively drive engagement, particularly when influencer authenticity and content relevance are emphasised. Content marketing, when amplified through influencer marketing, plays an important role in enhancing brand engagement in the

Kenyan context, contributing to meaningful audience interactions and growth in brand loyalty. However, its effectiveness depends on the quality and relevance of the content shared by influencers. Although content and influencer marketing are effective, Kenyan marketing agencies may need to consider if this effect is substantial enough to warrant the cost and time investment required to integrate these for enhancing brand engagement.

The results align with the literature, which suggests that content marketing, when combined with influencer marketing, can effectively build trust and deeper audience engagement in a synergistic relationship that, when used together, achieves a level of effectiveness that neither could attain alone (Pulizzi, 2013; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; Han & Balabanis, 2023). As noted in prior research, influencers' credibility and their ability to amplify valuable brand content enhance consumers' emotional connections with brands, leading to increased engagement (Lou & Yuan, 2019). This study extends these insights to the Kenyan context, showing that content marketing, supported by influencers, can play an important role in overcoming scepticism towards paid endorsements; thereby driving higher brand engagement.

Regarding Research Question 2, the results indicate that specific attributes of content marketing show a moderate positive correlation with brand engagement. The Pearson correlation value between content marketing attributes and brand engagement was  $r=0.602$ , suggesting a meaningful relationship between the two. This means that as content marketing attributes such as content relevance, consistency and authenticity improve, brand engagement also tends to increase in a linear manner.

Further analysis identified key attributes of content marketing, such as the content's relevance and authenticity as particularly important, with these attributes strongly influencing how consumers engage with brand content. For example, content that aligns with audience interests and is delivered by trusted influencers tends to drive higher levels of interaction and loyalty; thus, it reinforces the importance of creating relevant and consistent content to build deeper consumer connections. This moderate relationship suggests that the attributes of content marketing are much more important in determining the level of consumer engagement. Focusing solely on increasing content relevance, consistency, and authenticity would tend to yield substantial practical benefits for brand engagement.

The results support existing literature, which emphasises the importance of relevant, authentic and consistent content in driving brand engagement, particularly when content marketing is integrated with influencer partnerships. According to Hollebeek and Macky (2019), consumer engagement is enhanced when content resonates with consumers' interests and values, a point reinforced by the strong correlation found in this study between content relevance and brand engagement. Pulizzi (2013) highlighted the value of content marketing in building trust and loyalty, which this study supports by showing that authentic content shared by influencers increases consumer interactions and engagement.

The results also affirm Lou and Yuan's (2019) research, which found that authenticity and trust are crucial for consumers to engage meaningfully with branded content. In

the Kenyan context, this study expands the literature by showing that these attributes are equally effective in enhancing brand engagement, particularly when influencer marketing is used to amplify the content. It can thus be argued that the attributes of content marketing significantly correlate with brand engagement in the Kenyan market.

Lastly, the results reaffirm the relevance of the two-step flow of communication theory in a novel context, as Kenyan influencers effectively serve as intermediaries for marketing agencies, amplifying the dissemination of brand content to consumers (Choi, 2015).

## Theoretical implications

This study enhances the theoretical understanding of the strategic integration of content and influencer marketing in a Kenyan context by providing empirical evidence of influencers' roles in driving brand engagement on social media.

The results contribute to the academic discourse by offering insights into how content marketing and influencer marketing can be integrated in an East African context for more brand engagement.

As the first academic study to survey Kenyan marketing agencies on content marketing and influencer marketing, the results lay the foundation for further scholarly exploration and discussion. To illustrate, this study encourages future studies to validate these findings across various African contexts, to increase understanding in emerging markets.

## Practical implications

The results emphasise the importance of strategically integrating content and influencer marketing, as this concerted effort will not only introduce new consumers to the brand's messaging, but it also amplifies brand engagement and encourages long-term loyalty. Online brand communities are further strengthened when members can discuss brand-related topics, leading to enhanced social media brand engagement.

By prioritising the delivery of authentic, consistent and relevant content, Kenyan brands can build deeper consumer relationships in online brand communities. In doing so, they can also build credibility and address trust issues related to influencer marketing.

Thus, to address the challenge of Kenyan customers' scepticism towards paid influencer endorsements, marketing agencies should integrate content marketing as a strategy to build trust through value creation.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated how content and influencer marketing are strategically integrated to enhance brand engagement among Kenyan marketing agencies, using a quantitative approach through a web-based survey. The results indicate that integrating content and influencer strategies plays an important role in enhancing brand engagement on social media, as it allows brands to connect meaningfully with their audiences.

The study also foregrounds the importance of specific content marketing attributes, such as relevance, authenticity and consistency, which are essential for driving brand engagement with influencer marketing. Content that resonates with the audience's interests and is delivered by credible influencers builds deeper emotional connections with brands; thereby enhancing consumer loyalty and interactions, besides building meaningful and vibrant online brand communities. Marketing agencies in Kenya are thus encouraged to prioritise the development of relevant and authentic content in collaboration with influencers to effectively engage consumers.

The study also has some limitations. Owing to the small realised sample size, the results can only be generalised to the Kenyan marketing agencies that participated in the study. Additionally, the statistical analysis was constrained by the sample size. Furthermore, the quantitative findings were not enhanced with a qualitative component to further probe the marketing agencies. The study also only obtained perspectives from marketing agencies, and not from Kenyan influencers.

Future research should therefore include interviews with both marketing agencies and influencers to obtain deeper insight into the perceived role of content and influencer marketing in brand engagement in a Kenyan context.

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